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Adventure

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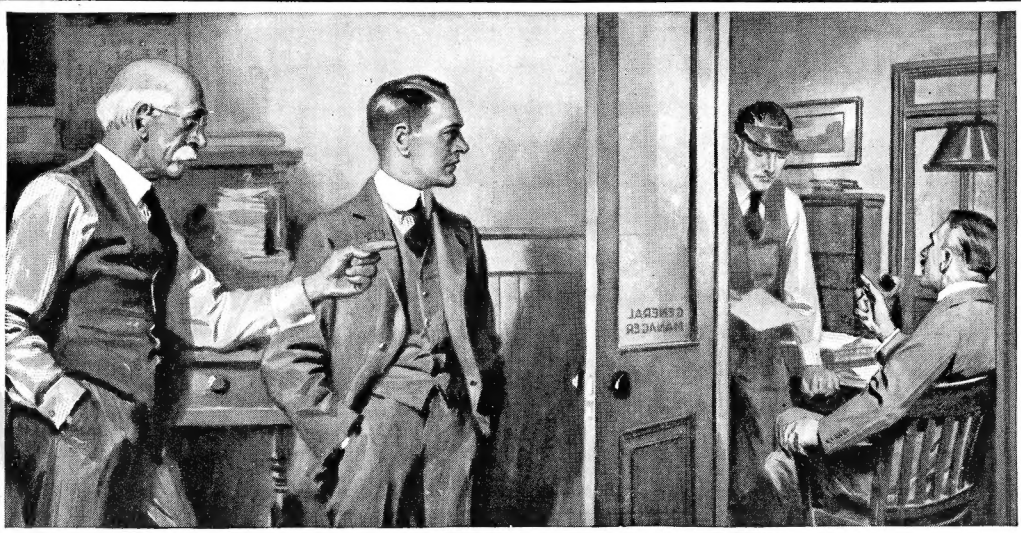

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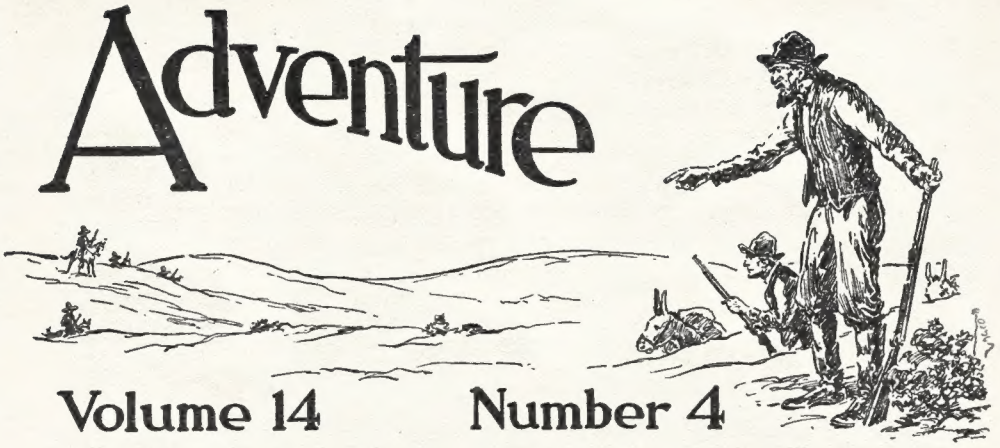

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ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

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FIRST SEPTEMBER ISSUE

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Vol. 14 Adventure No. 4

August 1917

A Complete Novel *by* Kathrene *and* Robert Pinkerton

The North-woman

Authors of "The Iron Factor," "Guiding Clementine," etc.

CHAPTER I

THE LEDGE

EACH evening when Wallace Searles returned to his seat at the top of the gorge the emotions which had characterized his first visit to the spot returned with undiminished force. Silently, without movement, he sat on a boulder and, elbows on knees, chin in hand, stared at the scene before him.

No one could escape the first sense of awe that was engendered by the spectacle. There are waterfalls far higher, there are volumes of crashing water far more stupendous, there are settings more beautiful. But this sheer, unbroken, perfect cataract gliding so easily and yet so irresistibly out and down, inspired with its invincible power through the view of the great lake behind it.

From Wallace's seat he could see the great stretch of water with its distant shore. It lay there quietly, seemingly immovable, and yet always it pushed and forced itself out and down to crash and boil upon the rocks so far below. That expanse of lake behind that great drop for which it seemed to wait so patiently, gave to the waterfall a background of reserve force, of invincibility, of permanence, which no single stream, rushing through a narrow gorge to tumble with greater volume from a greater height, could possibly possess.

It was to this fact, after the first awe had begun to diminish, that Wallace Searles's technical mind always turned, to this and the natural advantages for power which the falls afforded.

"If the greatest engineer in the world had been given the opportunity to regulate Nature exactly as he wished, he could not have done better," he always thought, sometimes muttered, as he made his evening study of each detail of the site.

"A better dam than man could build, a high, dry, safe, ample site for the power-house, a head of water, and a volume, that

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will give twenty thousand horse-power easily—why, it couldn't be improved upon."

In his mind he pictured the course of the water slightly deflected, saw the giant turbines and the monster dynamos in place. His eyes were dazzled by the glare of the sun on the galvanized roof of the power-house beneath him, and over the ridge, set in a wide lane cut through the thick spruce and pine, ran the poles and the wires that would steal this power and carry it away.

And then, as always, when the last detail had been planned, when the sun was low and the evening chill had crept down, came the last, the greatest, emotion. Sometimes his chest swelled as though it would burst, a tingling sensation crept beneath his skin, his heart seemed to swell, and a feeling of infinite tenderness and compassion swept through him. He bowed his head so that he could no longer see the falls or the lake, and the emotions within shut out even the sound of the waterfall.

"And they called you a dreamer, dad, and they laughed at you, and they sent you to your grave with a sense of failure. They broke you with their scorn and lack of sympathy and a hideous misunderstanding. But we'll show them, daddy, you and I. We'll show them."

Wallace Searles jumped to his feet, took one last, triumphant look at the lake, at the falls, at the deep gorge, and then turned back toward the brush. Only this evening he stopped suddenly and whirled. He had been so accustomed to dreaming there at the brink, so accustomed to having all the grandeur and all the possibilities and all the reveries of the place to himself he could not comprehend intrusion. Not once had he seen a human being since his arrival four days before. Nowhere had there been a sign that the place was ever visited.

And yet, as he looked down at the great, flat table of rock across the river upon which only a few minutes before his imagination had pictured the shining roof of the power-house, he knew that he saw a woman hurrying across toward the edge of the whirlpool on the opposite shore.

For a moment she stood looking down at the white-barbed jaws of the monster trap. The mist clouds swayed back and forth, hiding and revealing her, and then they swept in a rush about her, seeming to enfold her in their rolling, wheeling embrace.

The next instant they rushed back as if in fright before a gentle current of air from down the gorge, and when they were gone, the rock where the woman had stood was bare.

Wallace Searles jumped forward to the edge of the chasm and peered down through the mist into the furious kettle beneath him. He did not act because there was no action that could be taken. The efforts of a million men could not avail. He shivered a little as he thought of what death in such a place must be, and then, because there was nothing else to do, he turned and began to follow the edge of the cañon down stream, his eyes always on the twisting, struggling water beneath.

It was not until he had gone more than a hundred yards and had begun to realize that it was a quarter of a mile at least to the first place where he could get down to the river, that he suddenly stopped, suddenly realized how useless it was for him even to try to recover the body. Slowly he turned back to the falls, drawn as irresistibly to the spot as the current had swept the woman away.

As he retraced his course through the brush and up the slope he hurried more and more until, emerging on the flat crest which afforded a view of the lake and of the falls, he stopped to stare incredulously at the boulder from which he had been accustomed to look at the scene.

On the great, rounded rock, her back to him, sat a woman. She wore the same brown skirt, the same white waist, as the one who had disappeared in the swirling mist across the river. She, too, was hatless, and down her back hung a great rope of corn-colored hair. He remembered now that the sun had shone on such a head in the mist below.

The clothing and the hair of the woman on the boulder sparkled with little beads of moisture, just such globules as would be deposited by the mist. But they were not soaked. She had not been in the water. And yet she was across the river.

Unnerved by his relief, and in turn aroused by a growing indignation, Searles stood watching the figure on the boulder. Her attitude was not like his had been. She did not look at the falls or at the lake beyond. Instead she swung a foot back and forth across the bare rock, carefully poking and turning something with her toe. Suddenly she reached down, picked up a white

object, examined it closely and then wheeled to face the young man behind her.

There was no surprise, no embarrassment, in her face when she saw him standing there. She nodded, smiled, then said:

"I think I have your seat."

"How did you know that?" demanded Searles, his amazement transferred so suddenly.

"Oh, it was easy to see that you were sitting here, and that you have been here before. Let me see. One—two—three—six—eight. Four nights. But you are very wasteful. When these are gone, what will you do? I don't imagine that there are any more this side of Winnipeg, unless they have this brand in Port Arthur, and even that is a good two hundred miles."

Searles now stood beside her, looking at the place toward which she had been pointing while she counted. Then he laughed.

"I see!" he exclaimed. "You saw the cigarets I smoked here. I had begun to think you were unreal, a water spirit after all."

She looked up quickly, with just a little flash of sympathy that lasted only an instant before the mischief that crowded after it.

"You—you saw me?" she asked.

"I saw you," he answered, "standing there on the flat rock beside the falls. The mist eddied in, and when it rolled back you were gone."

"And you thought you had witnessed a tragedy and you named it 'Maiden's Leap Falls' right then," she taunted.

SEARLES flushed with the indignation he had first felt when he saw her sitting on the rock. She saw it and spoke quickly.

"I am sorry I frightened you. Of course, I never saw you up here, never dreamed any one was watching. But I have done it so many times, and it is the only way to get over here unless you go half a mile down the river and paddle."

Again she smiled to temper her teasing, but Searles's expression did not change.

"You must never do it again!" he exclaimed. "You're not plaguing me, as you think. I discovered that passage beneath the falls the first day I was here. Any one would suspect it from the name, 'Curtain Falls.' But you must never do it again. It is dangerous."

"Dangerous!" she laughed. "I have done it for years, and so has Stan. Only the Indians are afraid to go under the water. Why, I didn't even get wet."

"I know," Searles answered sharply, for his fear had not entirely left him, and he also wished to impress firmly what he was about to say. "I went through myself. I saw it all, saw, perhaps, more than you ever did, and that is the shelf which forms the path beneath the falls is liable to go any time. Just the weight or the jar of a person walking may send it down."

The girl was not frightened. Resentment of his tone made her own answer a little vehement.

"That passage is on the solid rock," she declared. "It has been there for ages. Nothing could dislodge it."

"Listen," said Searles, and he began a description of the geology of the country, the peculiar reason for a straight waterfall in a region of hard granite where falls were invariably only a succession of violent, tumbling rapids, and of the probable history of the formation of the spectacle before them.

"You see," he concluded, "that ledge is the last of the soft rock. It has been undermined clear across the middle, and the drip of water behind has cut off most of the support from the rear. Its own weight may take it down any time. You must never go across again."

"Not even now?" she asked a little fearfully, for his array of scientific terms and facts and his evident knowledge of the subject had been convincing.

"I can take you across in my canoe. It is down the river below the rapids."

"I don't like to put you to all that trouble, and, besides, I'd like to make one more trip through. I don't like the idea of having my private trails marked 'No Trespassing.'"

"You don't mean that you would go through there again, after what I have told you?" demanded Searles.

"Certainly. Just the once more."

"But it's suicide!"

"I'll risk it."

"But why?"

"That's why," she smiled, and she jumped down and walked to the edge of the gorge and looked into the whirlpool beneath her.

Searles followed, angry and perplexed.

He did not know whether she was having fun at his expense or that she really meant that she would return as she had come. He realized that if it were the former he would only be aiding her by protesting further, so as he stopped beside her he said—

"You told me that you have always gone across beneath the falls on the ledge. I didn't think that you lived here."

There was nothing about the girl to indicate that she did live within many hundreds of miles of the place. Her skirt and waist were distinctly of the city, most recently of the city, Searles had noted. Her skin was fair, untanned. The palms of her hands were smooth and pink. One can not even idle in the wilderness and be thus.

Moreover, there was no backwoods shyness, though he admitted that the stamp of the city was lacking almost to the same extent. There was just a naturalness, almost a childish confidence, in her attitude toward him, and yet there was mingled with it the certainty and poise which he had believed existed only where the trails are paved.

The girl had first struck him as being beautiful, too, but now, with more leisure to study her, he was a little mystified as to what had induced this first impression. He had seen more regular features, better noses, even mouths more nicely curved. But still the impression of beauty remained, and it was not until he had marked the quick, easy strides as she walked across the flat rock, the swing of her shoulders, the strong, straight, rounded body, the glint of the setting sun on the great masses of corn-colored hair, that he realized that health, perfect, abounding, bursting, laughing, joyous health alone, had given her a charm he had never known before.

"I have lived near here all my life," she replied to his last remark. "Only, the last three years I have been in Toronto, in school. It is two years since I have been back, and this is my last vacation. I came only yesterday."

"In school?" he asked unthinkingly. Somehow, she had impressed him as being older.

"The university," she answered. "I have one more year."

She had seen his surprise and added in her former bantering tone:

"The preparatory schools around here are hardly up to the standard."

"I don't always bungle this way," he defended himself. "I haven't recovered from the fright you gave me, I guess."

"I hope that's it," she laughed. "I was afraid you were one of those dry, scientific chaps after that lecture you gave me. You are not connected with the geological survey, are you?"

"No, I just happened to know a little geology," he answered quickly.

"Then you are——"

She stopped in confusion and added hastily:

"I beg your pardon."

Searles had been so startled by the sudden turn of the conversation to his own affairs he did not recover at once, and it was the girl who spoke again—

"If you are going to be near here longer we will be glad to see you at the mission," she said. "I am Joan Malloch. We are always glad to see people from the outside, and you'd like Stan."

"I would be glad to, Miss Malloch. My name is Wallace Searles. From Detroit. But I didn't know there was a mission anywhere near here."

"It's only a small one. Stan runs it, just as his father did. It's on that deep bay near the trading-post," and she waved her hand toward the opposite side of the river and down the lake shore.

"I'll be glad to come some evening. And now we had better start down river if you are to get back before dark."

He led the way across the flat rock on which they had been standing, expecting she would follow. After a few steps he turned just in time to see her head disappear beneath the edge of the chasm. So quickly did it go he had the sensation that she was falling, and for an instant he could not move.

When he did hurry to the gorge it was to see Miss Malloch already half-way down the narrow trail that led to the edge of the whirlpool, running swiftly, with quick little leaps and twinkling feet, on a dipping ledge where a slip meant death.

"Come back!" he called so loudly that his voice must have been heard down in the gorge despite the roar of the falls, for the girl turned, smiled, waved her hand as she stopped at the edge of the whirlpool.

Then she turned at once, seemed to walk straight into the falling water, and disappeared.

Searles, angry because he was powerless, afraid because he knew that he had told her the truth about the ledge behind the cataract, stepped back helplessly and sat upon a boulder from which he could see the opposite side of the falls. For what seemed to be the longest period of his life he did not take his eyes from the spot. A wind blew down the river, swept back the mist cloud, leaving his vision clear.

But the girl did not emerge from behind the curtain of crashing water. At first he believed that he had overestimated the time. Then he thought that she would go carefully and take longer.

Suddenly there came a realization that girl, ledge and all might tumble without his knowing it. Behind the curtain that descended with the power of twenty thousand horses, beneath the roar that swelled up from the bottom of the gorge like the muffled beating of twenty thousand drums, what would there be to tell him that a small ledge of rock and a girl had tumbled into the white-crested abyss?

Searles sprang to his feet and strode again to the edge of the gorge. At the same instant a corn-colored head was thrust above the brim and a white face looked into his.

Silently the girl climbed to the flat rock and stood before him.

"I was a fool," she confessed simply. "Will you take me across in your canoe?"

"Of course, but I ought to spank you first."

She smiled quickly, as if such a proceeding would be rather amusing. But she did not reply and it was his turn to taunt:

"So you lost your nerve?"

"No," she answered, and the smile had vanished. "You were right about the ledge. When I got there it was gone."

CHAPTER II

MISSIONARY AND MAN

THE REVEREND STANTON BANCROFT reached around the Indian's neck, grasped the back of his collar, gave him a whirl so that he faced the open door of the wigwam, and then, with the full force of a swinging right foot, sent him sprawling to the ground inside.

As he turned, the man's squaw, a long butcher-knife in one hand, charged straight at him. The Reverend Bancroft remained perfectly motionless until she was only five feet away, the knife held high for a deadly thrust, her eyes blazing as blaze those of an animal.

Then Bancroft's two feet left the ground suddenly and together. Straight up and out they went until the soft toes of his shoepacs connected squarely with the squaw's chin. Her rush stopped and she flipped backward and lay motionless on the ground.

"That is the only thing of value I ever learned from that wild Frenchman, Peltier," Bancroft said aloud as he bent over the woman.

He picked up the heavy body, carried it into the wigwam and placed it beside that of the man. For a moment he looked at them, sadly, compassionately, but as he went outside there was only anger in his eyes. Slowly he walked across the open space before the wigwam, picking up the knife the squaw had dropped as he passed, stopping only when he was before an old man on a windfall.

The Indian was evidently very old, very feeble. Apparently he had seen nothing that Bancroft had done, but he looked up at the young man when he stopped before him. For a full minute their eyes met in a steady gaze. There was no more emotion in Bancroft's face than in the other's. No word was spoken. And yet at the end, when Bancroft sat down beside the old man, they understood each other perfectly.

But as the minutes passed and the young man turned the situation over in his mind, his indignation and his perplexity increased until it was half in anger that he finally turned to the other.

"You see," Bancroft began in Ojibway, "what it does. For the first time in my life I have had to strike a woman. Your son and his squaw have always been my friends, as good friends as I ever wished. Now look at them. See what whisky has done. See what it will do. This thing has got to stop, has got to stop before your people become worse than the beasts. Where did they get it?"

Bancroft knew, even when he began to speak, that he would learn nothing. No one ever learns from an Indian where he gets his whisky. When the old man did not reply he arose in anger and began a thorough search of the camping spot.

Every blanket and old piece of cloth, every birchbark basket, every sack and article of clothing, was shaken and unrolled and thrown aside. But nowhere was there sign of a bottle.

He extended the search through the little clearing and beyond it, under fallen tree trunks, in hollow logs, beneath moss, in the centers of thick clumps of brush. But nowhere was there anything that even resembled a bottle. When the examination was finished he returned to his seat beside the old man and for a long time the two sat and smoked.

"I am a very old man," the Indian finally began. "I was here before you were born, before your father, who died an old man, was born. I have seen many white men come and go, the great Company's men and the others, the priests and the missionaries, and the bad men who brought whisky to my people. I have seen the police come, too, have seen them take some of my people away to be asked foolish questions.

"But when the whisky comes, and my people get it, the priests and the missionaries and the men of the great Company and the police and the men who ask questions in the courts, none of them can do any good. You have lived among us all your life and you know, as your father knew. You know that the Indian becomes a dog with the whisky in him, and you know that the Indian knows that he becomes a dog.

"But what of the white man who does it?" the old man suddenly demanded. "Why don't you ask questions of him? Why don't you go to him and look for the bottles?"

"That's what I want!" exclaimed Bancroft eagerly. "Only let me get the faintest idea as to who that white man is and I'll settle with him. I'll guarantee he never sells another bottle in this or any other country."

"You would call the police from the outside to come for him?"

"Police! Never!" cried Bancroft. "Here's the police I would call," and he extended his two hands toward the other. "Here is police enough, the best sort of police. I can trust these. The others I can not trust."

"And you and your father have always taught us not to become angry, not to strike our brothers."

"No man ever does exactly as he preaches. I may be a preacher of the gospel, and I may tell you and your people the things that the Bible says should be told. But I am a man, too, just as you or any one else, and this whisky business has gone so far, my friend, that I'll be a man first and a preacher afterward when I learn who has been doing it."

"Your father was always gentle."

"Yes, God bless him, and I am ashamed sometimes to think I am less so. I can't help but think, though, that he would cease to be gentle if he had searched as long as I have for the cause of all this trouble among his people. Come. Tell me who it is and there will be no more of it."

But the old Indian only smoked and looked at the ground and after a time Bancroft arose and walked to the shore of the lake. Listlessly he lifted the bow of his canoe and set it afloat and listlessly he stepped in, knelt in the center and began to paddle away.

Stanton Bancroft was not happy. Since Midwinter he had been searching almost ceaselessly for the source of the whisky which had so suddenly and so mysteriously appeared in the wilderness. In his lifetime, due to his vigilance and to that of his father before him, the Indians had led happy, industrious, healthful lives. Now, in four months, the entire band had become demoralized.

The catch of fur in the latter part of the Winter had dropped nearly one half. The happy gatherings of the Summer, with the dancing, the plentiful supply of meat and fish, the long, warm, lazy days when the Indian rests from the severe labors of the Winter, all this was gone. Some of the families gathered near each other but most of them camped alone. The children hung around wigwam doors crying for food. The men, and women, too, lay inside, stupefied with drink.

It was more than a life-work with Stanton. It was his own life's work and that of his father. He could not fail without bringing ruin to that which his sire had built. His was an obligation far greater than that which a man sets for himself.

But as always when Bancroft paddled alone through the Northland, something else soon came to occupy his mind. Despite his work, despite his many journeys in every direction, one thought was never far from his mind, was seldom crowded from it entirely.

Upon the death of his father Stanton had become the guardian of Joan Malloch. She was only three years younger and had been a member of the family since she was five. Her father, a Hudson's Bay Company post-manager and the son of one, had left her in the missionary's care upon his death. There had been a sum of money sufficient to maintain her until she was twenty-five, but this had never been touched by either of the Bancrofts until three years before when Stanton had been forced to draw upon it to send her away to college.

Up to the time when she had returned after that first year's absence, Stanton had thought of Joan only as a playfellow. Since childhood they had fished and hunted and paddled and driven dogs and snowshoed together. They had visited sick Indians, helped in the work of the elder Bancroft, studied together under his direction, spent the long Winter evenings of the north country reading to each other. His own two years in college, the only two he had ever spent outside the wilderness, had been the sole break in this program until Joan's departure.

AND then came that first vacation, that time when Joan, who had gone away as a girl, returned as a woman. It was incredible to Stanton, this change that had come over her, and it was equally incredible the change that had come over him. For the first few days the old camaraderie was absent. Both were puzzled, both were uncomfortable.

Women invariably understand such situations first, meet them better, but in this case Stanton alone realized the difficulty and eliminated it so far as Joan was concerned. When she returned to school in the Fall it was without any suspicion that the young missionary's heart went with her.

So, as Stanton paddled across the great lake in the evening his thoughts did not remain long with the Indians and the mysterious source of their whisky. As on many another homeward journey, he pictured the gracefully swinging back and shoulders of Joan in the bow, saw the rays from the setting sun glinting in her hair, heard her laughter, her chatter, caught glimpses of her face as, smiling, she turned her head for an instant.

Often Joan had been with him thus in the last two years of her absence. He even had formed the habit of talking over his problems with her, for Joan alone could understand. But as always he drew near the shore with that sudden feeling of loss, of emptiness. Another year would elapse before Joan again would be in a canoe with him. The second Summer she had spent with school friends in Toronto. It had been his wish, often expressed in his letters, that she should do that, that she should take every advantage of her stay in civilization.

Nothing had ever been a more severe strain on his character or test of his will than those written and spoken sentiments. He dreaded having her go away to college, and yet he had planned it and urged it, had, through his own sacrifices, made it possible for her to do so.

He dreaded having her meet other men, the men she would meet in college or on her vacations with college friends, and yet he felt that his duty to her compelled him to urge that she remain in Toronto in the hope that she would meet them.

For, although in his loneliness Joan always rode in the bow of his canoe, always worked with him on his Indian problems and filled the old mission with her exuberant spirit, he was too unselfish ever to hope to make that alluring fancy a reality. He realized too keenly that life with him in the Northern mission was too cramped, too shut off from all of the things that Joan should have, to consider asking her to stay with him in his work.

And so, in a futile endeavor to overcome his desire for Joan's love and companionship, he constantly forced, sometimes ruthlessly, almost viciously, his plans for the successful mating of the girl.

Not even, however, by keeping this idea before him could he quiet his own desire, and always with him, though never admitted, was the thought that if, after meeting the man fitted to become her rightful mate, Joan should turn back of her own initiative to the North country, then he could honorably speak and offer her a share in the life in which he felt that he must continue either to meet success or fill his obligations. It was this unadmitted hope that made him rejoice unconsciously in every sentence in her letters which showed her homesickness for the Northland or her

wish to take part again with her boy playmate in the old wilderness adventures.

But healthful youth is never constantly sacrificial in its spirit and there were times when, stepping from his canoe weary and discouraged, he longed ardently for Joan's presence, when his determination to be only Joan's dutiful guardian weakened.

It was so this evening. Tired by his long paddle, discouraged by his inability to find the source of the Indians' whisky, he suddenly found himself regretting that he had urged Joan to stay in Toronto during her third Summer. He knew that she would have arrived at the mission by then had he asked her to come. Instead of the empty beach at the head of the bay there would have been a place of lightness and laughter. Instead of the empty evening before him with its futile conjectures there would have been the glad recital of wonderful events in that other world to which he had sent her.

But as Stanton pulled up his canoe the last thought brought back his natural self. Joan was where he wished she would be, in the place where she could meet the man she should meet, in a position to gain the things she deserved of life. It was for the best after all, and he still had his Indians, had only to make their problems more completely his.

And then with a rush from the top of the bank, Joan was upon him, Joan with her laughter, with that magnetic force which lifted all in her presence to the gay, bouyant heights in which she seemed always to soar.

"Stan!" she cried. "Stan!" and her arms were around his neck and she had kissed him once, twice, a dozen times.

Bewildered, almost unbelieving, he stood staring. Even the last kiss had failed to rouse him completely.

"But I thought," he stammered.

"You thought I was going to stay in that horrid city another Summer. I intended to, Stan. I had accepted two invitations, but when June came, and when I knew the poplars were beginning to show green, and the days were long and the black flies biting, why I just couldn't stay, Stan. I had to come."

"But your friends," he protested, still fighting the thought that she was back in the wilderness with him, "what did they think?"

"I don't care what they thought. Anyhow it was better. I would have been a grumpy guest, wishing all the time that I was back here, and I came."

Together they started up the bank and for the first time Bancroft saw some one standing there, dim in the shadows. He stopped, gripped by a sudden fear. What if . . . Had she brought . . . His knees trembled from something besides the cramped position of the canoe. He had never thought of that. He had urged her to go to college with the secret plan that she would meet other men. But the inevitable result, her before his eyes, her to torture him, that part of it he had never considered, had never prepared himself to meet.

"This is Stan, Mr. Searles," Joan was saying. "The Reverend Mister Stanton Dowell Bancroft. You'd never think it to look at him in those old clothes, would you? Stan, this is Mr. Searles, of Detroit, United States of America."

Bancroft stood motionless, speechless. Joan looked quickly from one to the other.

"Have you two met?" she asked.

"I don't believe I have had the pleasure," said Searles easily as he stepped forward and extended his hand. "I am very glad to know you, Mr. Bancroft."

With an effort Stanton roused himself and shook hands.

"I'm glad to welcome you, Mr. Searles," he answered as formally as possible that he might hide the resentment that he could not down. "Won't you come up to the house?"

He turned and led the way, walking ahead, trying to grip his senses, his emotions, to appear natural in this chaos suddenly burst upon him.

CHAPTER III

SEARLES FINDS OPPOSITION

JOAN realized before they entered the house that a strained situation existed between the two men, though she was unable to account for it in any way. She was quick to see, also, that only Stanton gave evidence of its influence.

The young missionary had so far recovered himself, however, that by the time they were seated in the living-room of the low, rambling cabin he made an effort to be agreeable.

"You wrote me about a number of people you met in Toronto, Joan," he said, "but I don't remember your speaking of Mr. Searles."

"No, I don't believe I ever did," she answered, and the bowed head and lowered lids, true forerunners of mischief, made his fears more certain. "You see, I never saw Mr. Searles until an hour ago."

"An hour ago!" cried Stanton, leaning forward suddenly and looking from Joan to Searles.

His eyes brightened instantly, and there was an eagerness entirely inexplicable to the others in his question.

Joan, a little disturbed, hastened with a detailed explanation of her escape at the falls.

"And the ledge is gone!" exclaimed Stanton at the end. "Do you remember the first time we went through there, Joan?"

"It is a miracle that both of you were not killed," said Searles crisply. "It was a foolhardy thing to do."

The others did not reply, and the young man from the States, realizing his rudeness, hastened to explain:

"You'll pardon my saying so, I hope, but perhaps a lack of knowledge of geology would lead one to believe that it was safe. As a matter of fact, I don't see what held the ledge there so long."

"Are you a geologist?" asked Stanton with sudden interest. "The Government?"

"No," answered Searles quickly. "I happen to know a little of the subject, is all."

It was his last chance, though he did not know it. Always, soon after meeting a stranger, woods dwellers give the newcomer an opportunity to explain his business. Usually the stranger is also of the wilderness and understands. If not, he probably does not catch the significance of the opening presented and thenceforth becomes an object of conjecture, often of suspicion.

Hidden business is seldom good business in the Northland, and in any event woods courtesy demands that a stranger shall go unquestioned if he fails to take advantage of the opportunity given to explain his errand.

Bancroft immediately changed the subject and the three talked of the falls, of the many times Joan and Stanton had crossed on the ledge, of the Indians' superstitions of the place. The falls led to other joint activities of boy and girl in the great playground that had been theirs, and the two talked on and on, recalling this instance, laughing over that.

There was the time when they had been forced to camp on an island on the great lake through a twenty-four-hour blizzard and the other when they had run the rapids together because the Indians had said it could not be done. Triumphantly and mirthfully they told of their hairbreadth escapes and recounted their childhood daring.

Searles, listening, found himself envying them their good times together. He had never known such a boy and girl friendship nor had he even known such a girl.

But as the reminiscent narratives continued there joined his feeling of wonder and envy a slight censure of Stanton Bancroft, who so unconsciously and so gleefully admitted having allowed a girl companion to share in dangers which might daunt grown men.

It was late when he finally excused himself. Stanton and Joan insisted on accompanying him down the half-mile trail to the foot of the rapids below the falls, where he had left his canoe. Bancroft carried a rude but efficient lantern made of a tomato-can with a candle for a light. He held it so that it helped Searles alone.

"I am all right," protested the American "Hold it so that Miss Malloch can see."

Joan laughed happily, and there was no derision in her tone when she said:

"We carried it only for you. I haven't been over this trail for two years, and yet I could describe every stone in it and every tree beside it as I go along with my eyes blindfolded. Stan and I have crossed here many a dark night, haven't we, Stan?"

It led to more reminiscences as they walked, partly suggested stories of canoe and toboggan, of paddle and rifle, of swamp and twisting river, of swarms of mosquitoes and of the bitter cold of Winter. Joan was like a child shut off for a long time from the flowers and the grass and the sunshine, and her return to the wilderness brought a lightness of spirit nothing could suppress.

Stanton, too, so suddenly released from the load of fear that had oppressed him when he arrived at the mission that evening, was in a mood to join Joan in her exuberant memories, and Searles became only a wondering and rather envious listener.

They were still laughing, still talking, as

he paddled away in the darkness and they went up the trail to the mission. When he turned into the slough and left the river behind, Joan's clear voice came to him through the murmuring water at the foot of the rapids.

As Wallace paddled slowly in the backwater toward his camp around a bend in the slough he experienced a queer feeling of unrest. The dramatic conditions under which he had met Joan, his anger because of the risks she had taken, his fear for her safety combined with the fact that there was something about her that he had never seen in girls he had known, had their effect, now that he was alone.

But most disquieting of all was the realization of the interest she had aroused, the desire to see her again, the persistency with which his thoughts returned to her. There was an attraction here more subtle than he had ever known, and as novel as it was subtle. It was all the more disquieting because Wallace had believed that his future so far as women were concerned, was settled.

There was a girl back in Detroit, a girl he had known since childhood, a girl he understood and who understood him. She was of his people, of his life. They had gone through school, through college, as companions. There had been no engagement, no definite word of love. Hardly had there been a thought of love until that Summer when he had said good-by.

Then, in that last interview, something intangible, unexpected, something more indicative of the future than of the present had come to him and made him know that when he finished the work at hand he would go to her and she would be waiting for him.

It was as he had always thought love would come to him, a thing of slow growth which would in time reach down into the deepest roots of his being and come to mean more than life itself.

So the thought of this girl had gone with him on his mission, had been with him more than usual as he sat through his evening vigil, and had begun to assume more definitely the idea that she was his sweetheart rather than his companion.

NOW like a sudden shaft of bright sunlight after weeks of dense clouds, like a draught of strong wine to unaccustomed lips, Joan, typifying in every way the great wilderness in which she had spent her life, had burst upon him. It troubled him, as it delighted him, but by the time he had reached his camping site he had ascribed it entirely to the incident at the falls and believed that when morning came with its work, it would be forgotten.

It was forgotten, but more quickly than Wallace had expected. He had purposely chosen a camping site up the slough so that his presence would not be known to any one passing on the river. When he had gone to the falls after supper he had left his guide, a half-breed he had employed at the railroad more than a hundred miles to the south, at the camp baking sour-dough bread. Each of the four evenings since his arrival he had done this, and always he had found Frank asleep in the tent upon his return.

The fire was out, the camp quiet, as he stepped ashore. With a pocket-flash he lighted his way across the beach to where the tent stood at the edge of the brush. As Wallace lifted the flap he heard a moan from the ground at the right and instantly swung his light in that direction.

Lying half under a thick clump of spruce, his arms thrown out, his head back, lay Frank, the half-breed. Wallace ran to his side, held the light in his face, felt anxiously for wounds or injuries. The man's face was a pasty brown. The eyes were closed, the mouth wide open. Clearly he was only in a stupor.

Instantly, indignantly, Wallace was on his feet, prodding the body before him with a vigorous toe.

"Get up!" he commanded angrily. "Get up, you drunken fool. Where did you get anything to drink?"

But Frank did not move, did not seem to feel the kicks against his ribs. His eyelids never flickered and he lay as motionless as before. Wallace repeated his commands, kicked harder, reached down and rolled the man over, but to no avail.

Disgusted, angry, he turned and went to the tent. He threw open a flap, flashed his light inside and started to enter, only to stop and gaze at the confusion before him.

Blankets were tossed about, packs opened and the contents scattered. Even his shaving-kit had been unstrapped and razor, brushes and soap shaken out.

But it was not at any of these things that Wallace looked when he had sufficiently recovered from the shock to act. His first move was to go down to his knees and reach

for a black leather case, one corner of which protruded from under a blanket. Almost frantically he turned it over to look inside.

The first touch of his fingers upon the case was enough. The flabby sides told him it was empty. Instantly he began to paw through the confused mass of food-bags, clothing, cases and pack-sacks. He found a small package of paper but each sheet was blank. Another was the same.

The anxious, panicky expression on Wallace's face changed gradually to one of anger and determination. Systematically he began to shake out and fold the blankets, to put the various articles back in their respective bags. When everything was in order there were left the leather case, a bare tent floor and a small package of blank sheets.

Wallace went out and again tried to waken his guide, but with no better success. He brought a pail of water from the slough and dumped it over the man's head. He held the bulb of the flashlight against his eyes. But Frank would not stir. Wallace left him and returned to the tent.

With his flash he examined the ground before the door, but on the rocks and hard clay there was nothing to tell his untrained eyes whether a stranger had been there.

Because there was nothing else to do, Wallace went into the tent and to bed. He could not act until Frank had recovered consciousness, until he knew who the visitor was.

He was wakened by the rattling of a cup in a pail and lifted the tent-flap to see the half-breed, his hands trembling, draining the last of the spring water.

"Who was here last night?" demanded Wallace.

Frank looked around slowly, shrugged his shoulders and remained silent.

"See here!" exclaimed his employer angrily. "Where were you last night, and where did you get that whisky and who was here with you?"

"Don't know," Frank replied in that exasperating tone half-breeds and Indians employ when they decide not to talk.

The man acquainted with these people knows that he wastes his time with questions, but Wallace, angry, desperate, and without experience, attempted in every way he could to extract some information from his guide. Frank only became sullen and doggedly repeated his first statement, and nothing more could Wallace get out of him.

"Hurry up breakfast," he finally commanded.

After the meal Wallace tried again.

"Look here, Frank," he said. "Some one was here last night and stole some things from my tent. Who was it?"

"Don't know," was the reply.

"Where were you all the time?"

"Me no go away."

"Did you see anybody come?"

"Don't know."

"Where did you get your whisky?"

"Don't know."

"Did some one bring it here?"

"Don't know."

Wallace turned away in disgust and then wheeled back suddenly.

"Go down to those Indians we passed a few miles down the river," he commanded, "and buy a birch-bark canoe from them. How much will it cost?"

"Maybe ten dollars."

"All right. Tell the Indian to bring it here and I'll pay him. And hurry."

While his guide was gone Wallace spent an hour or more writing. When he had finished he again examined the ground around the camp but there was nothing to tell who the visitor of the night before could have been. He did not suspect Frank. If the guide had had any reason for stealing all the measurements and data that he had gathered at the falls he would not have ransacked the tent to do so.

Neither did Wallace suspect any casual thief. The man who had turned things upside down had been hunting for only one thing, and he had obtained it, the mass of notes and figures that showed the results of Wallace's four days' work.

THE loss of the notes themselves was not so important. They would be of practically no value to any one else, and they could be replaced in three days at the most. It was the significance of the theft that concerned the young engineer. It could mean only that his presence there was known, that the object of his journey into the wilderness was of much concern to some one else, and that he must expect opposition.

All that was clear, but it was of little value unless he were able to learn its source. Wallace did not believe it possible that any one in the States had known of his mission

and would attempt to defeat it. Not only had his plans been kept secret, but if there had been opposition, or an attempt to be first on the ground, such methods would not have been adopted.

Since his arrival five days before, he had not seen a person, with the exception of the Indians a few miles below the falls, until he had met Joan Malloch the night before. In the four days that he had spent in choosing his secluded camping spot, in looking over the falls, taking measurements and making a thorough preliminary survey, he had kept a careful lookout. But he had seen no one and he believed that no one had seen him.

Except for his visits to the top of the gorge each evening after supper, Frank had been with him constantly, and as Frank had camp duties after supper, and he himself had taken the canoe, there was no opportunity for the half-breed to get away.

Frank, of course, must understand something of what was being done, but no one at the railroad had been informed of his plans or even of his destination. He had depended upon a map made by his father to find the lake and the falls, and Frank had never been at the place before and did not know the Indians who lived near it.

There remained only Joan Malloch and Stanton Bancroft. Wallace Searles did not think for an instant that either was concerned in the theft of his notes. He had been with them during most of his absence, and nothing about the young missionary or the girl could ever lead any one to believe that they would be a party in such an undertaking.

Wallace's only thought of them was that Bancroft might be of assistance to him. The young man knew the country and its people thoroughly. He could tell if any one living in the vicinity might be a tool of an outside interest, of some one who knew of the falls and was planning on a later conquest.

After an absence of three hours Frank returned in the canoe, an Indian paddling another and a squaw a third. Wallace paid the ten dollars asked for the canoe to the man and sent him and his wife off down river. Then he gave Frank these instructions:

"Take the birch-bark canoe and go to the railroad. Mail the letters in this bundle in the post-office and send these two messages by telegraph at the station. Wait there a day and a half until there is a reply. When it comes, start back at once and come to the lake across the portage at the head of this slough. I'll be there."

Frank made up a pack of a small tent, his blankets, a couple of dishes and some food and placed it in the canoe. Then he asked Wallace for his wages.

"When you get through with the job," answered the engineer sharply.

As soon as Frank had disappeared around a bend, Wallace began to pack up his duffel and strike his tent. Loading everything into his canoe, he paddled up the slough to the end, where a portage led on northward to the big lake, reaching it at a point half a mile west of the big falls.

It was the middle of the afternoon before he had packed across his outfit and the canoe, pitched camp on the lake shore and cooked his midday meal. He worked hard and as soon as his lunch was finished, shoved off his canoe and paddled eastward, past the falls and into the bay on which the mission stood.

Bancroft saw him coming and was at the beach in time to meet him. The young missionary was entirely self-possessed on this occasion. His greeting was sincerely cordial and he expressed his regret that Joan was not there to help entertain his visitor

"I am just as glad she is not just now," said Wallace as he took the chair Stanton placed for him. "I came to see you on a matter of considerable importance to me and wanted a little talk with you. I'll explain.

"I am an engineer. My mission in this district is being kept secret, but I know that I can trust you."

"Certainly," interrupted Bancroft. "Anything you tell me will be confidential. Ministers are trained for that, you know."

"It wasn't because you are a minister," said Wallace frankly. "In fact, I didn't think of your being one. I simply thought that you were a man in whom one can trust, and that you might be able to help me with your knowledge of the country.

"The point is this. Curtain Falls, as you perhaps have often thought, is a beautiful cataract. It is also what is probably one of the best water-power sites within a thousand miles. Other falls may have more power, but none that I ever heard of possesses the natural advantages of this site.

"I don't believe a power-plant could be

constructed at any other falls on the continent at less cost per horse-power than here. It is really so marvelous a site I expect to meet with considerable incredulity when I report. But I have only to present my facts and figures to start things immediately."

"You don't mean that work on a power-plant may begin here soon?" exclaimed Bancroft.

"Very soon, I hope."

Searles looked at the other curiously. The young missionary's face had suddenly become set in hard lines and there was a baffling look of angry surprise in his eyes.

Then Bancroft leaned forward tensely, and when he spoke his tone was low, sharp.

"And you want me to help you?" he began. "Do you know what you are asking? Do you understand what such a project means to me and to the work to which I am devoting my life? It means the end of it all. It means that you will bring into this country influences which I can not combat, influences which mean the ruin of an entire people, the destruction of their happiness, their prosperity, of their very lives.

"To make money you would do this. To put something more into your pocket and into the pockets of those who will never see this place, you are willing to come up here and wreck and degrade and destroy. What is there in you men from the outside that lets you do such things, or makes you do them, or blinds you to what you do?"

CHAPTER IV

THE STORY-BOOK MAN

WALLACE SEARLES, mystified by this unexpected outburst, was about to defend himself when both men heard a step outside The next moment Joan ran into the room. Wallace wondered if she ever walked, ever made a deliberate movement, and again that strange feeling of unrest, that buoying influence of the girl's personality, seized him.

"B'jou! B'jou!" she cried when she saw Searles. "You're just in time for a feast. See what I caught."

"It's a lake trout!" cried Stanton. "Not in the net?"

"In the net," answered Joan proudly. "You see, Mr. Searles, it is very seldom that we get a trout at this time of year. There are not many in the lake, and to find one in the net is a rare treat. Isn't he a beauty?"

Seemingly unmindful of its struggles she held the great fish by its gills for the men to see and to admire. And Searles, as he watched her stand in boyish triumph, knowing the physical effort of net lifting, found himself wondering again at this mysterious mixture of femininity and physical competence.

"You'll stay for supper and help us eat him, won't you?" Joan asked.

The American hesitated. The spell of the girl had made him forget for an instant what Bancroft had just said to him. But the missionary hastened to second the invitation and he seemed so sincere Wallace quickly assented.

"I'm not much of a cook," he laughed, "and I imagine my own supper would be lonely, too. I'd be glad to stay."

Stanton Bancroft did not in any way refer to the subject which the engineer had broached upon his arrival. Joan went at once to the kitchen to begin preparations for the meal and took the two men with her. While one built a fire she sent the other for water and soon her infectious spirits had made both forget what had happened just before her arrival.

When the great fish was half baked there came a call from the lake, and instantly Joan and Stanton started through the house and down to the beach, yelling like two children. Wallace, following more slowly, saw them greeting a woman who had just stepped ashore from a canoe manned by two Indians.

They came slowly up to the house, Joan on one side, Stanton on the other, of the new arrival, all talking and laughing, while behind came the Indians with two large packs.

"This is Mr. Searles, aunty," Joan said when they entered. "Aunty Knox isn't a real aunty, Mr. Searles. She is more than that. She's a mother, too, and everything else that we need."

Mrs. Knox, Searles gathered from the conversation, had been visiting a friend in a Hudson's Bay Company post one hundred miles farther north, and later he learned that she had been in charge of the domestic part of the mission since Joan and Bancroft were children.

Beneath the dour appearance of the old Scotchwoman, whose life had been spent in

the Northland, the engineer was surprised to find a spirit as gay as that of Joan, though always he was conscious of a strength of character which one might expect from a lifetime spent amid such surroundings.

"Searles, Searles," murmured Mrs. Knox when the meal was half finished. "I know the name. I have known some one of that name. But it is a long, long time ago. Searles, Searles."

"But aunty," broke in Joan, "we haven't told you the good news for you. The ledge under the falls is gone."

"My prayers will all be thanks tonight," exclaimed the older woman. "Now I won't worry about you foolish children again. And the ledge is gone. Ledge. Searles."

"That's it!" she cried suddenly, and she turned to Wallace. "It was a man named Searles who first went under the falls on that ledge. Why, I remember him as well as if it were yesterday. And you children, too, must remember him. He told you long stories and went fishing with you."

"Of course, Stan!" cried Joan. "We called him the Story-Book Man. Father Bancroft always said he was a dreamer. Don't you remember the long arguments they had, when we couldn't understand?"

"Mr. Bancroft thought a great deal of him," said Mrs. Knox, "as we all did. He went away the last time and we never saw or heard of him again. Mr. Bancroft wrote, but there never was an answer, and after a while we gave him up. He was always coming back to steal our falls and carry it away on wires to the lower countries. Mr. Bancroft would argue against it and he for it, and they would sit up half the night sometimes talking about it."

"And who won the arguments?" asked Stanton as he leaned forward eagerly.

"You know your father, Stanton. He wouldn't give in while Mr. Searles was here. But after he had been gone a year he told me often that he missed him, that he was a great man, only no one would ever know it. He used to ask me many times if I thought he was dead."

"He was dead," said Wallace quietly. "He died the year after he left here."

"You knew him?" cried Mrs. Knox.

"He was my father."

"And you are David Searles's son!" exclaimed Mrs. Knox in amazement.

Wallace only nodded. For several reasons he did not care to speak of his father there and at that time. In the first place, it would lead directly to that subject which he wished to avoid, his present mission in the country, and in the second place he had never discussed his father with any one.

UNUSUAL circumstances had caused this reticence. Since his father had died when he was twelve years old, everything had been done to wipe out his memory. His mother never spoke of him in the two years that she lived after her husband's death. Her father, who had reared and educated the orphaned child, went further and forbade all reference to his son-in-law.

"He was worthless, utterly worthless!" the old merchant had stormed to his only crony. "Always traipsing off somewhere instead of staying home and sticking to business like a man should. Always dreaming and talking and never doing. Always finding something nobody ever cared about or wondering what will happen fifty years from now.

"He got into my family but there won't be a trace of him left when I'm through with the job. That boy won't be a dreamer. He'll be a doer. I want him to run this business when I'm done, but if he'd rather do something else, all right. Just so he does it."

The grandfather succeeded admirably in all except one thing. He never even dimmed the boy's memory of his father. He made of the youth a clean, serious, amiable, conscientious, likeable chap, but one who carried into his young manhood an exalted, romantic conception of the man who, he firmly believed, went through life misunderstood, reviled and unrewarded.

Never did anything wipe out one feature of this boyish conception of his father. Rather, as the years passed, he grew more and more determined to make his first manhood's endeavor the establishment of his parent's position as something else than a dreamer of dreams.

The grandfather knew nothing of this. He went to his grave when the boy was a senior in the engineering school, and he went content that he had succeeded. Wallace was intensely practical, thoroughly a business man, the sort that

constructs but does not conceive. Nothing of his father was in him, nothing but the memory of him, and a rough map and the indelible words:

"Go there some day, boy. When you're grown will be time enough. It's there, thousands and thousands of horse-power. The clay beds are between it and the railroads. There is a good forty per cent. of alumina in most of it. And somebody is going to find that electricity and will get that alumina out of the clay. They've got to do something. The world needs aluminum more than it knows, especially in the next war. And aluminum has got to be cheap, cheaper than it is now with the present process.

"And there's lots more water power in that country, hundreds of thousands of horse-power. It's going to light and heat and manufacture for the continent some day. It's got to, boy. All these things have got to come. It's logic. It's reason. It's evolution.

"Things change all the time, and they are changing more now than ever, and will continue to change more. I can't do the practical things. I haven't had the training. And no one will believe me now. They think I'm crazy. They say electricity can't be carried a long way, and that even if it didn't all leak away the copper wires would cost too much.

"Lord, they're blind. When they learn to get aluminum from clay by electricity they'll have a cheaper conductor than copper, and they'll be able to use all those rivers in the North country to make more aluminum and lay more wires and get more electricity and—don't you see where it will all lead to?

"Do it, boy, when you're old enough. Here's the map. No one else will ever think of it up there. It will wait for you. And when the time comes, show them."

Wallace accepted this as a creed until he grew old enough to think for himself. By that time science had turned as his father had predicted. Things were coming true. The way had been pointed out. He plunged into his engineering course with more enthusiasm than ever and when he had had two years' experience after graduation he took the yellow old map and the scrawled field notes and started for Canada.

By that time his particular tastes and his inclinations had turned to other phases of engineering work, but this did not deter him in the least. He had come to look upon his father's wish as an obligation from which there was no escape, from which he did not wish to escape, as a self-sought task that must be performed before his time or his abilities were his own.

It was natural then that, in the presence of the young missionary and of Joan Malloch, Wallace did not care to discuss his father or his mission in the wilderness. He felt, however, a sudden desire to talk of him to Mrs. Knox. She had known him, perhaps had understood something of him. At least, the elder Bancroft had understood and undoubtedly Mrs. Knox had absorbed some of the opinions of the man whom she evidently reverenced more than any other.

Never had he talked of his father to any one. Never had he expressed in words his first life's ambition. He could not bring himself to talk of it now, and, though the others waited as if expecting him to speak, he was silent. Only when his father's prophecy was fulfilled could he tell what had been seething within him since that death-bed scene.

Joan, with woman's natural social instincts and fresh from three years of mingling with many people, was the first to sense Wallace's embarrassment and the first to relieve it.

"And the Story-Book Man was your father," she said. "I remember him so well and have thought of him so often since, only we always spoke of him as the Story-Book Man and never as Mr. Searles, Stan and I, and I never even thought of him when you told me your name."

"He was always so gentle and so quiet, and always looking farther than the other shore of the lake," said Stanton. "The Indians were a little afraid of him and thought he was looking through things. They called him 'The Man Who Sees Tomorrow.' "

Stanton stopped suddenly, surprised by his own words. He looked quickly at Wallace and then turned to Mrs. Knox.

"Was it about stealing the falls that he and father had such long arguments, aunty?" he asked.

"He said he would steal the water and take it away on wires, and your father said it couldn't be done, and that if it could be, it would be an outrage, defiling nature and

ruining the happiness of the people who live in this country."

"And did father always think that? You said he changed."

"Yes, he admitted Mr. Searles was right, that it had to be. I don't remember all that they said. Usually it was too deep for me, words I never understood."

Slowly Stanton turned back to Wallace. Twice he made an effort to speak, but the words did not come. He coughed, but the third time he was silent. Joan and Searles sensed the importance of the moment and waited.

Then as sharp and sudden and as unexpected as a crack of thunder, and as startling and unnerving, came a high, shrill yell from the beach. For an instant no one moved. Then Stanton, kicking his chair backward, was at the door and running through the big living-room to the front of the house. Joan and Mrs. Knox were after him before Searles had risen.

As they rushed through the house, the shrill yells, now mingling with shrieks of even higher pitch, continued. As the three hurried out through the door they saw Stanton starting down the steps toward the beach, while at the water's edge, yelling and waving a small ax, was an Indian dancing in front of a squaw who had backed up against a tree. She held a long butcher knife in one hand, waving it uncertainly over her head, while shriek after shriek came from her wide-open mouth.

"Drop it!" yelled Stanton as he started forward. "Drop it!" he repeated in Ojibway.

The Indian turned, saw him coming, swayed uncertainly, and then with a quick step forward swung his little ax high over his head and split open the squaw's skull to her mouth.

Searles, obeying his first instinct, turned and attempted to close the door on Mrs. Knox and Joan.

"Get in!" he commanded, "and lock all the doors!"

Mrs. Knox, without speaking, thrust past him, while Joan, with a quick movement, slipped by on the other side.

"Are you crazy?" he demanded. "Get back into the house where you are safe!"

He had grasped an arm of each and attempted to pull them back, but he could hold only Joan. Mrs. Knox easily tore herself free and looked at him scornfully as she started down the steps.

"We're not your city women, young man," she snapped angrily. "We are of the North country," and she was gone after Stanton.

Wallace turned to Joan. Her determination to follow Mrs. Knox was clearly evident. He realized that neither request nor explanation would deter her. Quickly he reached down and picked her up in his arms.

"I'm sorry," he said as he carried her into the house. "But you don't realize what danger you may be in. This must be settled by Bancroft and me."

Gently he set her on the floor and then darted out, closing and locking the door behind him. The next instant he was running down the trail to the beach, quickly overtaking Mrs. Knox. Before him was Stanton, rushing on toward the Indian, who now danced about the body of his victim.

CHAPTER V

WOMEN OF THE NORTH

WHEN the Indian saw the two white men and a woman running toward him he stopped yelling and stopped to pick up the knife the squaw had held. With a weapon in each hand, he turned to face them.

This brought Stanton up short. The man with whom he had to deal was the same he had dragged into his teepee only the day before. He was a big Indian, long, lean, cat-like in his movements, a formidable adversary when sober. Now, his mind inflamed by whisky, robbed of all caution by drink, possessing two good weapons, and the blood lust aroused by the taking of life, he was a match for more than one.

Without even a stick in his hands, Stanton was helpless. His first idea had been to subdue the man by the sheer force of his will, a factor that had won out more than once in the previous few months in his encounters with drunken Indians.

But as he stood facing the Indian across the body of the squaw he knew that nothing except force, perhaps nothing less than the death of the man, would save the lives of the white people at the mission. Even as he stood there in that brief instant, staring back into the blazing animal eyes, he found time to remember what a gentle, amiable, industrious, likeable person had been this

man now turned demon. And at the thought all the anger and indignation of the last few months culminated in a burst of fury, not against the Indian, but against the white man who was responsible for it.

Searles, thinking only of protecting the women, with only the city man's idea of an Indian on the war-path, had stopped to find some weapon. He knew that, with an ax and a knife, the Indian would be formidable at close quarters. Nothing but a battering ram would suffice. Beside the trail he found a long, heavy pole. Balancing ten feet of it before him, he charged full tilt into the Indian.

But behind the wild, glaring eyes of the savage was an animal cunning that the whisky seemed only to have increased. Apparently unconscious of Searles's advance, the Indian waited. Then, just as the pole reached him, he jumped to one side, dropped both ax and knife and wrenched Wallace's weapon from his hands.

Swinging the great, long club as a flail, the red man advanced upon his opponents. Wallace recovered himself just in time to scramble back in retreat with Bancroft and Mrs. Knox.

By common divination, the two men realized that the only method of attack by which they might overcome the now thoroughly infuriated madman was to separate. Quickly they got the Indian between them. Then each attempted to get possession of the knife and the ax.

But the Indian, suspecting their purpose, whirled and charged back, driving Stanton into the lake and Wallace into the brush.

Giving up the idea of getting possession of the weapons, the two men went at him again from opposite sides. Wallace was nearer and the Indian charged first at him. But the long pole was an unwieldly weapon and as it circled around it half dragged him off his feet. As he tottered Stanton rushed from behind and grasped the red man about the waist.

Whatever the effect of the whisky upon the Indian's mind, there seemed to be none upon his physical self. With a mighty wrench he whirled himself within Stanton's embrace. Then with a push as powerful he freed himself from the young missionary and flung him to the ground, where he lay without moving.

At that instant Wallace, charging with all his speed and weight, struck from behind. In the fleeting moment of Stanton's defeat the other had realized the strength and agility of his adversary. He realized, too, the danger of having his hold shaken off. With Stanton unconscious, upon Wallace lay the entire responsibility of protecting the two women and of saving the life, if there was life to save, of the young missionary. He saw that those long, powerful arms must be imprisoned and that the man must be disabled quickly or his own strength would give out.

But without personal contact Wallace could not realize the Indian's frenzied strength. No sooner had he flung his arms about the red man and felt the power of his opponent than he knew the futility of his plan. Despairingly he exerted every ounce of strength within him, and even as he did so he knew that he had failed.

Hardly had he been flung from his hold than the red man was upon him. The conflict had taken them nearer to the water than either had realized and as the Indian threw his arms around Wallace their feet slipped and the two rolled over into the lake.

The white man was beneath as they fell and the Indian held him there. The frenzy of a drowning man lent strength to Wallace, but struggle as he would he could not get up. The Indian seemed only to sit upon him and hold his head under. After a moment, Wallace's efforts became more feeble. His chest seemed about to burst. Everything turned black and he lost consciousness.

When he opened his eyes it was to find Mrs. Knox working his arms up and down vigorously.

"There, you're all right," she exclaimed.

She jumped up at once and hurried to Joan's side. Wallace turned his head and saw the girl deftly lashing the Indian's hands behind his back. Mrs. Knox began at once to tie the man's moccasined feet together. Their work completed, they both lifted on one side and turned their prisoner over on his back.

The man's face was black and distorted. His eyes were closed, and his cheeks and forehead were streaked with blood that ran in streams from a gash on his right temple.

"He'll do no more harm now for a while," commented Mrs. Knox as she arose from her work. "No, let him bleed," as Joan began to stop the flow of blood with a

handkerchief. "It'll let some of the strength out of him, and God knows he's got enough. Now let's look after Stanton."

Joan turned and saw Wallace looking at her. She smiled and waved her hand and as she turned to where Stanton still lay on the sand, called:

"Are the gates really made of pearl?"

"Hush, child," commanded Mrs. Knox. "Wait for your joking until Stan's eyes are open."

"They're open now," came Bancroft's voice, and the women ran to him with little cries of joy.

"Where are you hurt?" asked Mrs. Knox as she knelt beside him. "We took care of the other one first because he was that near drowned. We knew your hurts could wait."

"I guess there's nothing wrong, except that he jarred the breath and the senses out of me."

Stanton sat up, holding his head with one hand. He saw Wallace, his clothing wet and the sand sticking to him, lying beyond the body of the Indian.

"What happened?" he asked in amazement. "Did you beat him, Searles?"

"He beat me," was the reply. "He had me down in the water and as good as drowned. The next thing I knew Mrs. Knox was bringing me to and Miss Malloch was tying the Indian's hands. What happened?" And he looked at the two women.

"Nothing," answered Mrs. Knox irritably. "You two had more courage than sense. When that red devil had you down in the water, I yanked him off by his back hair and Joan, who had to go around to the back door because you locked her in, hit him on the side of the head with his own ax. A couple of fine Indian fighters you two are."

BUT Wallace did not seem to hear. In frank admiration and gratitude he looked at Joan. Then, remembering that a young woman had had to enter such a struggle to save him, he turned to her in reproachful embarrassment.

"You should both have remained in the house," he said. "You had no right to run such risks."

"And a fine one you are to be talking that way," exploded Mrs. Knox. "Where would you have been, and where would Stan have been, if we had?"

Stanton had risen to his feet and was looking down at the Indian. His face became stern and his eyes blazed.

"This is what it has come to," he finally exclaimed. "It was bad enough, the other, the degradation of these people, but I never believed it would come to this. I have known of Indians having whisky before. I have heard a great deal about it from others, but I never knew it to have this effect upon them."

"I thought Indians always went on the war-path when they were drunk," said Wallace as he arose to his feet.

"It is very seldom they do. Usually they become very sociable and confidential and then go to sleep or become helpless. As a rule a drunken Indian is the easiest man in the world to handle. I kicked this fellow to bed only yesterday afternoon, and his wife here, poor woman, I had to knock out or she would have carved me up.

"But this drunkenness is different. It lasts longer. The Indians won't leave it alone after a spree, and it changes them as I never knew whisky to change them before."

"Why did you ever leave them with more of the stuff yesterday?" demanded Mrs. Knox.

"That is one of the strangest things about it, aunty. I searched the entire place, inside and outside their teepee, and I looked everywhere and into everything. And there wasn't a sign of a bottle to be found. That is the strange part of the whole business. For four months now I have been finding the same thing. An Indian camp. The man and the squaw drunk. The children crying from hunger. I have searched dozens of teepees and camp-sites and I have yet to find a bottle."

"But there must be bottles," objected Mrs. Knox.

"Of course there are bottles, or jugs, but I haven't found a thing that could have contained whisky. Whoever is bringing it into the country and selling it to the Indians is more than clever. He covers his tracks so that I can't find a trace of him, and he has taught the Indians to do the same. Ordinarily an Indian will never tell where he gets his whisky, but these people go even further now, and the only reason for knowing they have it is that most of them are drunk most of the time."

"Stanton," said Mrs. Knox, "if you had

listened to me you would have settled this thing long ago. It's that Gus Fleenor or I don't know a wolf when I see it."

"Your intuition is worth a lot, aunty, and I can't see who else it can be. But twice I have been there when he was away and I have looked high and low through his whole place, and the only bottles I found were one of medicine and one of vinegar. I've met his men when they were bringing in supplies from the railroad and have examined every pack without finding a bottle. I have kept track of everything that went into his place. When I had a provincial policeman up here in March we searched his post thoroughly from top to bottom and from end to end. He was perfectly willing, even glad to have us do it. Said he wanted it settled that he wasn't the man. He even showed by his books how his receipts of fur have dropped off fifty per cent. and his sale of supplies by as much."

"What does he care how much he loses on fur and flour and pork, just so he sells the whisky," retorted Mrs. Knox. "I knew that man was a wolf when I first laid eyes on him two years ago."

"Who is this Fleenor?" Wallace whispered to Joan.

"He is the man who owns the trading-post a half mile down the lake shore. He came two years ago this Summer when I was last here. Macklem, who ran the post ever since I can remember, sold out to him."

"I know Fleenor is a devil," vociferated Mrs. Knox. "This proves it. We spoke of him, and there he is."

She had been looking out toward the mouth of the bay and the others turned to see a canoe coming toward them, a single occupant in the stern.

"Has he changed any?" asked Joan in a whisper.

"No," answered Stanton. "I've tried to be friendly with him, and he is cordial enough, I'll admit, but there is nothing on which we can meet in the conversational line. I never saw another like him."

They were silent as the canoe drew near to the shore. Wallace, though lacking in that romantic feeling toward the far north which reaches so many, was nevertheless curious to see this owner of a trading-post. He had heard of such men, of their peculiar characteristics, and he looked forward to this meeting with no little interest.

The canoe touched the beach and the man stepped ashore.

"Howdy, folks," he said with a short, quick duck of his head.

Stanton greeted him pleasantly, as did Joan, but there was only a stare from Mrs. Knox.

To Wallace Searles came only the shock of incongruity. Where were the broad shoulders, the ineradicable stain of weather, the eyes, circled by sun wrinkles, clear and steady, the air of self-reliance, the spring of the forest step? This man was short, pudgy, flabby. His skin was pasty, unhealthy. He walked heavily, with an effort.

Further, there was something familiar about him to Searles, not his features but his type. In perplexity the young man searched his memory but he found nothing. Then Fleenor spoke.

"Youse folks been having a little party, eh?" he exclaimed as he saw the bodies lying beyond the group and walked over to them. "Well, well, if it ain't old Long Leg's woman!"

He turned toward Stanton with a quick glance, his little eyes lighting suddenly.

"Who croaked her, bo?"

Instantly Wallace knew. The discordant note struck by this man was understood. The evidences of a character irreconcilable with his surroundings were explained by his words. He was no Northman, no free spirit of a wide, free land, no straight, towering, strong-limbed pine. He was rather a foul growth in a fair place, and instantly Wallace placed him.

He was no new, interesting type. He was just the tough keeper of a tough dive in the toughest district of a great city.

CHAPTER VI

"ANOTHER BREED OF MEN AND WOMEN"

"I DON'T know who is responsible for her death," Stanton answered slowly. "The madman her husband became because of drink, struck her with an ax, but the real murderer is the white man who sold him the whisky."

"I suppose you'll have to send for the bulls."

Stanton looked at Fleenor questioningly.

"He means the police," explained Wallace.

The fur-trader glanced furtively at the engineer, who was looking at him steadily, and then grinned.

"Sure, the bulls, the cops," he said with a grin. "You savvy English."

"I'm not in the habit of speaking that kind," replied Wallace.

"Don't get up on your ear, bo," retorted Fleenor. "There's too few of us white folks up in this country to be henning over nothing. It's a long way to send for the police, Mr. Bancroft."

"I'm not going to send for the police," answered the missionary instantly. "I'm through with the police, and, besides, I don't want to see this man punished for something he never would have done. It would not be justice."

"But, Stan," objected Joan. "He murdered her. We saw him. You wouldn't turn him free now. He might kill some one else."

"That's just it," answered Stanton quietly. "He or another may repeat this, and there is always the chance that such a thing will happen so long as the man who sells whisky to the Indians goes unpunished. He is the man who is guilty of this murder, and he is the man I am going to catch and punish."

"But you have been trying for four months," said Joan, "and you are no nearer a solution of the trouble than when you began."

Stanton did not answer as he stood looking at the dead Indian woman and the bound body of her husband. The others saw that he could not speak, that his emotion prevented an expression of the determination that had come with this climax to his fight for the Indians' welfare.

To Wallace, remembering Bancroft's burst of indignation against his own work, there came a realization of what this man's resolve might mean. He recognized a fixity of purpose which few things human could turn aside, and he saw in the missionary a foe to his own hopes.

Only to Fleenor did the message fail to come.

"You're right, Mr. Bancroft," he said. "These Indians ain't got any business with the red stuff. Give them a drop and they want a barrel. They can't lug it decent like a white man."

"But do you mean you are going to set this man free?" asked Wallace incredulously. "We haven't any right to do such a thing."

"There is a bigger question of what is right involved in this," answered Stanton angrily, "and, no matter what the law may be, justice demands that the men who sold whisky to this Indian, and not the Indian, should be punished for this woman's death. And that is what I am going to do."

"What are you going to do first, Stan?" asked Joan.

"I think it will be easy to get the information I want now. At last I think I can make an Indian talk."

"I wouldn't depend any on that," advised Fleenor. "I can't get anything out of one if he don't want to say it. There never was an oyster like 'em."

Only Joan saw the fur-trader's face as he began to speak, and in that momentary gleam that came to his eyes she sensed something behind the apparently trivial remark.

Stanton did not reply but knelt beside the Indian and felt of the wound on his temple. The blood had stopped flowing and was beginning to blacken on his face.

"Did you hit him very hard, Joan?" Stanton asked.

"Not too hard. Just enough to make him less dangerous."

Wallace stared at her in amazement. He, a man, would have been more anxious to know whether he had fatally injured the Indian. But this girl, even though intensely feminine, showed very little concern. It troubled him, and baffled him, for a moment. It did not fit in somehow with the idea he carried of this vivid girl who had in so short a time won such a place in his thoughts.

Wonderingly, he looked at Stanton, who had accepted Joan's participation in such a matter-of-fact manner. To the young missionary, throwing water on to the face of the unconscious murderer, what had just passed might have been only another of their exciting childhood adventures. At last the Indian opened his eyes.

It was evident at once that he was sober, that the whisky had left his mind cleared but also wholly bare of any recollection of what had happened. Joan saw this and whispered in Stanton's ear:

"Get him away quick, Stan. Don't let him know until he feels better."

"Searles, will you and Fleenor help me

get him to the house?" asked Bancroft. "One of you on each side of his shoulders here and I'll take his legs."

Fleenor panting for breath, they at last laid the man on the floor of the living-room, where Joan began to bathe the hardened blood from his face while Stanton took the men outside and down to the lake, where they removed the body of the squaw to a temporary hiding-place and covered it with a blanket.

"I was just stopping a minute, and you're busy," said Fleenor when the work was finished. "I'll go on home."

No word of polite insistence that he remain was offered, and the fur-trader paddled slowly out of the bay just as the late twilight of the North country was dropping over the lake.

"Now for the man," said Stanton as he led the way to the house. "I must get him and start. You won't mind my running off this way?"

"Not at all," replied Wallace. "Is there anything I can do to help you?"

"No, thanks. This is a game I've got to play alone, and I must play it at once. I'll be back in a few days, however, and I'll be glad to see you again."

BANCROFT went directly into the living-room where the Indian lay, still bound. He bent at once and cut the ropes about the man's ankles and then those at his wrists.

"Come," he said in Ojibway, leading the way to the door.

"Oh, Stan!" called Joan, running outside after the missionary. "Where are you going?"

Stanton stopped, spoke to the girl for a moment in a low tone, and then went on to the lake, the Indian following. Those in the house saw them set a canoe afloat and get in. The Indian in the bow, they paddled out toward the mouth of the bay and soon faded into the darkness.

"Poor Stan," said Mrs. Knox. "You don't know how he has worried about this whisky business and how hard he has worked. For the last four months, or until I went away a month ago, he has done nothing else. There wasn't anything else to do. None of the children were brought here this Summer to get their schooling, and so few of the Indians camped near here, and those few were always drunk."

"But surely there is some way to get trace of who is bringing the whisky into the country," said Wallace. "I'd like to see him do it, not only to win out for himself, but because my guide got drunk one night and I don't want it to happen again."

The women looked at him quickly and Wallace stopped speaking. He did not wish to tell more because it touched upon the theft of his notes.

"Don't you know where he got it?" asked Joan.

"I haven't any idea, and I wasn't able to learn from him. He simply wouldn't answer."

"He got it from Fleenor," stated Mrs. Knox positively.

"I wouldn't hesitate to believe anything about that man," said Wallace. "I agree with you there, and I wouldn't look any farther if I were Mr. Bancroft. The man's appearance and his speech alone confirm any suspicion one might have."

"The same thing I've told Stan any number of times," declared the older woman. "But he won't see any evil in any one until the evil itself shows. It's the hardest thing in the world for him to think any one is not as honest and clean as he is himself."

"But if he does find any proof against Fleenor," and Joan shrugged her shoulders. "Stan may be a missionary, but there are times when you'd never know it."

"There are no times when you'd know it," stoutly defended Mrs. Knox. "That is the reason he is such a good one, has such an influence over the Indians in a big district. You should have seen the missionaries I have seen, my child. If I were an Indian I would remain a heathen. His father was as fine a man as ever lived, and he did a great work in this country. It was Christianity that drove him, and he often worried because he thought Stanton didn't have enough of it. But Stanton seems to have something that does better work."

"He's just human, is all," supplemented Joan, and her eyes as she said it gave Wallace a sudden desire to have this girl as his champion, too. "He's just thoroughly, essentially human, and he doesn't try to deceive himself or any one else with religion as it is generally understood. I sometimes think Stan hasn't much of the religion his father had."

"He has it," defended Mrs. Knox, "only he shows it differently, that is all. I'm glad he is that way. His father never could have done anything in this case."

"When will he be back?" asked Wallace.

The women merely shrugged their shoulders.

"But you won't stay here alone while he is gone?"

Joan laughed and Mrs. Knox looked at the young man in surprise.

"We'll take turns standing guard," said the girl, and then she added quickly: "I know what you mean, but there is no danger. We've been alone together a great many times. We never think anything of it, probably because there is absolutely nothing to harm us. In your city it might be different, but there isn't a safer place in the world than the wilderness."

"Then I'll go now," said Wallace as he turned toward the door, "but I'll call in the morning to see if there is anything I can do. My camp is just beyond the falls, on the lake shore."

"We'll be glad to see you any time, aunty and I."

Wallace was grateful for the invitation, but when he had received it he suddenly wished to make certain a visit to the mission the next day. That desire to see Joan again, which had troubled him after their first meeting at the falls, became greater than ever. He felt that he could not leave without knowing that he would surely see her the next day.

"There is the squaw's body," he ventured. "If Mr. Bancroft does not return, it will be necessary to bury it. I'll come over in the forenoon so as to be of any assistance if it is needed."

Joan thanked him and stood in the door as he went down the steps and on along the path to the beach. When he had disappeared in the darkness she turned back to Mrs. Knox.

"It is strange that the Story-Book Man's son should come back after all these years, isn't it, aunty?" she said.

"Maybe that's why he is here," was the quick answer. "Stan gave him a chance to tell his reason for being in the country and he didn't take it. If Mr. Bancroft hadn't been so opposed to wagering, I'd be willing to bet that's exactly why he is here. He's planning on stealing the falls and taking it away on wires, like his father said could be done, and he doesn't want any one to know what he is about."

"But that wouldn't be stealing. It is done a great deal and wonderful things are being accomplished by harnessing the rivers of the country."

"It's stealing nevertheless to take a thing like that from Nature. God put those falls there and he never intended that any one should interfere with them. And there'll be bad luck for the man who tries it."

"I'd like to see him do it," replied Joan warmly. "It would mean light and work and happiness for a lot of people who need it."

Mrs. Knox turned to the girl and looked at her sternly for an instant before she spoke.

"I know education is a great thing, Joan," she said, "but I never have been in favor of your going to Toronto to college. Now I know I was right. It has put ideas in your head that shouldn't be there. Ask Stanton what he thinks of this stealing the falls. He'll tell you, and his reason will be happiness and work for a lot of people."

"But Mr. Searles wouldn't do anything that isn't right," protested Joan. "You can see that he is not that sort. And I hope he wins out."

Again Mrs. Knox looked at the girl, this time with a new expression. Her lips were pressed firmly together and evidently she studied her words well before she spoke.

"Joan, listen to me," she began. "I'm going to speak once and never again. You and your father and his father have always been of the North country. Yours is another breed of men and women. Just remember that, always."

CHAPTER VII

VANQUISHED AND VICTOR

IN THE WEEK that followed the fight with the Indian on the beach in front of the mission, Wallace Searles more nearly forgot his father's dream than at any time in his life. He worked hard every day, made his investigation thorough, guarded carefully against further molestation, but always his thoughts were at the mission, and he spent more and more time there in Joan's company.

Wallace did not take time to analyze this attraction or his susceptibility to it. Rarely if ever did he think of the girl in Detroit. Joan Malloch brought something into his life which had never been there before. She reached depths of which he had known nothing. In her presence he experienced a peculiar intoxication that was new, ineffable. It remained with him when he was alone in his camp at night. It prolonged the hours between his visits to the mission. It whirled away those he spent with her.

In the first few days, so engrossed was he with the delights of companionship with this fresh, free girl of the wilderness, Wallace did not think of reciprocation. It was enough to be with her, to talk with her, to think of her when he was absent. Then came the sudden, compelling desire to have her always, to be with her through the years, not the days, to prolong indefinitely this new and wonderful form of intoxication.

Joan, despite her three years in Toronto, was still thoroughly of the wilderness. New associations, new standards, new ways, had in no wise changed her. She was as frank and simple and sincere as in the days when her horizon had been limited to the mission and those connected with it. Only, perhaps, there had been a slight allurement in the less essential things of civilization. First of all she was a woman, and the city, a monument to man, is the home of woman.

The city held those things which appealed to Joan, as they appeal to all women. It afforded the comforts, the diversions, the little things which mean so much to women, without which the lives of so many of them are completely empty. And, if Joan remained the same in manner and thought, she had not escaped the lure of the softer things.

Wallace Searles typified much of this to her. He was so thoroughly of the city he seemed to bring its atmosphere with him. The very work on which he was engaged, for he had soon forgotten his caution and explained his presence in the country to Joan, was emblematic of civilization.

Further, Wallace was good-looking, seriously intent on his mission, bred to success, possessed of those qualities which made him equally a man's man and a woman's. Culminating all were the romantic circumstances attending their first meeting. So, while she showed, womanlike, no evidences of this new element in an otherwise carefree life, Joan, too, looked forward to the afternoons and evenings when Wallace came to the mission.

In that week Stanton did not return. Wallace expressed some apprehension but both Mrs. Knox and Joan maintained that he was perfectly capable of taking care of himself and that they need not worry.

Wallace, too, had ceased to think of what he had believed was the first expression of opposition to his work. He had regathered his notes and figures at the falls in two days and always after carried them with him. He had purposely left his camp unguarded but with things left so that he could tell instantly if any one had been there. But in that week no one visited the camp-site and no one, so far as he was able to learn, spied upon him while he worked around the falls. In time Wallace came to believe that Frank, while drunk, had taken the notes, not knowing what he was doing, or prompted by a maudlin desire to learn what they were about. Wallace believed, too, that he had obtained the whisky from Fleenor and that what had appeared to be an evidence of opposition held no such significance.

After three days at the falls Wallace spent two more paddling around the great lake. In that time he visited practically every part of it, studying the shores, the two large streams which flowed into it, and the character of the surrounding country. From Joan he learned that these streams drained other large lakes and that not once had the lake been known to be much lower than it then was.

The result of this work left Wallace in high spirits. While his experience in water-power was not great, nothing he had ever heard or read of, except Niagara, rivaled this site in natural advantages. An enormous supply of water, a natural reservoir far better than man could build, a falls perfect in every respect—the thing was almost unbelievable.

The knowledge that his would be the victory when this power was turned to man's use, added to the young engineer's intoxication. He felt confident that success was achieved, that nothing could now stop the culmination of a dream that had been his father's and that had fired his life. When he went to the mission the evening of his return from the trip around the lake this conquering spirit was evidenced in a new attitude toward Joan.

First he told her of his father. Probably because he had never spoken of him and his dream to any one, probably because he now felt so certain that the dream was to come true, he talked as he had never known he could talk. And, in the telling of that story of a misunderstood life, of a youthful determination and ambition, he expressed himself better, more appealingly, than he imagined.

Joan, always sympathetic, found herself swayed by this simple story of a boy's devotion to his parent. To her it was like looking at an unclothed soul. She suddenly found herself desiring more than anything else that he should win, and in the same instant felt certain that he would.

Elated, Wallace declared that success was at hand. He did not tell of the work, of the possible obstacles, of what must still be done. Those were things for a man to understand, for men to hear and discuss. For this girl, whom he desired more than he had known it possible for a man to desire, it was only necessary that she know the end. It was the way of his kind, and yet, as he drew near the finish, Joan felt a sudden emptiness, a sudden aloofness from this thing which had become of such great moment to her.

"It will end my field work," Wallace said. "I had this one thing to do before I could begin those which I would rather take up as a life's work. This was more of a—a——"

"A crusade," suggested Joan.

"Yes, that's it. I had to vindicate my father before I ever did anything else, but from now on my work will be in the city. And Joan," he said suddenly as he turned toward her, "when it is done, when I have put this through, when this job is out of the way, I'm going to have something to tell you."

He reached forward suddenly and took her hand as it lay on the log upon which they were sitting.

"I want to tell you now, dear," he whispered, "but I can't, not until I have squared up for my father. Then I'm coming. You'll wait, won't you, Joan?"

Nothing could have been more effective than this ingenuous plea. To the woman's soul of Joan it was the message of her knight battling his way to her side. Love had called across a torrent. Only the torrent must be crossed and then . . . .

Quickly, tenderly, the girl pressed the fingers that held hers and then sprang to her feet. In the darkness he felt the warmth of her smile, felt what her answer would be, and the man alone, unshackled by a boyhood obligation, was at her side in an instant.

"Joan!" he cried. "You love me!"

THE click of a paddle against the gunwale of a canoe came to them across the water, sounding, in the stillness, and with the instant echo from the pines along the shore of the bay, like a rifle-shot.

"Hush," whispered the girl. "Some one is coming."

Together they looked out into the darkness which seemed part of the water itself until the dim outline of a canoe appeared.

"It's Stan," said Joan in a low voice.

In silence they waited. Joan drew a little away from Wallace. She had realized suddenly that Stanton must know soon, that he might know even then, after that exclamation from Wallace. And, realizing this, she wondered what he would think, what he would say, Stanton, who had always been her comrade, who had shared all her thoughts and secrets. Unaccountably there came a sudden terror of his knowing, wholly unexplainable but nevertheless real.

"Stan!" she called. "Oh, Stan!"

"Hello," came from the canoe and in a few seconds the bow grated on the sand.

Joan ran down to the edge of the water.

"What luck?" she asked. "Did you learn anything?"

"Nothing," came the dispirited reply. "I am just where I began."

"But the murderer? What did you do with him?"

"He's free, free to do it again if he gets the whisky."

"But, Stan. You were so confident that you would find out this time."

Bancroft lifted his canoe from the water and carried it back up the beach.

"How are you, Searles?" he said, extending his hand to the engineer. "How is aunty, Joan?"

"She's well. We're all well. But, Stan, I'm so sorry. Where have you been?"

"I'm hungry, Joan. Come up to the house and I'll tell you while I'm eating. You'll join us, Searles?"

Even Wallace was struck by the haggard

countenance of the young missionary in the lamplight. The fire was gone from his eyes, the determined lines from his face. He appeared to be utterly crushed, but only Mrs. Knox read aright the cause of it all. She knew it was not the problem of the Indians, not his temporary defeat, but a realization of what the presence of Searles at the mission really meant.

To the older woman it was unmistakable, the change that had come to Joan. Her first glance at the girl when she entered the room with the two men told the story. She knew more of Stanton than men realize that women know and she knew that he, too, had read the signs in the girl's eyes, that he had been crushed by what he had found there, not by what might have happened in the seven days of his absence.

"You poor boy," said Mrs. Knox as she set a cold supper on the table. "And you got nothing from the Indians?"

"Not a thing. I took the murderer straight to the chief's wigwam and explained the whole thing. I told them the time had come for them to do something, that this could not go on any longer. I told them I would have the police in and arrest every one of them, as much as I hated to do it, but they didn't even answer. They sent two men after the squaw's body and the next day they buried her. I officiated at the funeral, and everything I said was with the one point in view—a confession.

"But it didn't come despite all that I could do. I argued, I threatened, I appealed to every good instinct that has been in them. I appealed to their love of my father, but nothing touched them, nothing."

"And they never weakened once?" asked Mrs. Knox.

"Only once. That was the night I left here. The chief and several of the older men said they would hold a conference and tell me in the morning. They said they realized the gravity of the situation and I believed that they would act favorably.

"I was tired, after that shaking up I got on the beach, and I went to bed in the chief's wigwam. But I couldn't sleep. I got up and sat outside. After a while I saw a canoe come out of the darkness on the lake and stop at the beach. A man got out and walked across to where the Indians were in the council wigwam. After five minutes he came back, got into the canoe and paddled away.

"When it was too late I realized what that might have meant. I ran down, tumbled into the first canoe I found and started after him. But I couldn't even learn which way he went. If I had only been awake, only been clever enough, I would have ended everything right there. That man brought a message, and it must have been a powerful one because it changed the attitude of the chief and of all the old men. I feel confident the chief was in favor of telling me. But the next morning he would not even discuss the decision that they are to remain silent."

"But Stan, it can't go on this way!" exclaimed Joan.

Bancroft looked at her and smiled wearily.

"It is going on, Joan," he answered. "I have done all I can to stop it. I have seen the whole tribe drop from prosperity to poverty, from self-respect to degradation, and I have been powerless to stop it. All my father's work and devotion is being wiped out in a few short months. In a few more, every trace of it will be gone."

"But something has got to be done!"

"What?" he asked dispiritedly.

No one answered. None even looked at the young missionary as, head bowed, he sat at the table. The defeat of a strong man is never a pleasant sight, and because this man, who, they knew, was strong, admitted defeat, the spectacle was all the more heart-rending to the two women who knew him best.

The silence was broken by a light foot on the step and then a gentle knock.

"Come," called Mrs. Knox.

The sound of moccasined feet crossing the big living-room came to them and the next instant Frank, Wallace's guide, stood in the door. He looked quickly about the dining-room and then handed a yellow envelope toward his employer.

Wallace grasped it eagerly.

"You'll pardon me," he said excitedly as he tore open one end and took out a sheet of paper.

He read it quickly, and as he read a smile lighted his face, a smile that grew as he glanced up at Joan. There was triumph in it, and, for the girl, something more than triumph.

"You at least have good news," said Stanton with just a trace of bitterness.

"It is welcome," answered Searles quietly,

for he realized a little of the contrast between his own efforts and those of the other. "I'll have to say good night, too. I must start for the railroad at daylight."

"Leave!" cried Joan.

"Only for a few days, just as long as it takes me to get there and return. I'll say good night to you people, and I hope to hear good news about the Indian question when I get back, Bancroft."

"Thank you," was the somewhat listless reply. "I don't know who'll have it for you, though. Good night, and a quick journey."

Joan followed Wallace to the door. As he turned and took her hand she whispered:

"Was it good news, Wallace?"

"The best sort. I think it means the end, so far as my work is concerned. Good night, Joan. In a few days—and he was gone.

The girl did not answer as she stood watching him hurry down to the lake. A sudden sense of loss had seized her, something she could not explain, that she did not understand except that it was not caused by the absence of Wallace. It was something else, in another place, and it hurt more.

CHAPTER VIII

SEEING TOMORROW

WALLACE SEARLES drove southward under a triple spur. Joan, success, the realization of his father's dream, all were within his grasp, all about to be achieved. He was too human not to be the more conscious of his own success since it had interrupted the scene of Stanton Bancroft's defeat. This was not because he had ever looked upon the young missionary as his rival for Joan. He had accepted their relation as that of two comrades, almost as brother and sister. Nor was he a vain man, seeking through such situations to magnify his own importance and ability.

But it would not have been possible for any of the group gathered about the mission dining table to have remained unaware of the sharp contrast between the two men, each trying to succeed in a difficult task. To Searles, who thought of Bancroft as the dreamer, the man who would delay progress for the welfare of a few Indians, the contrast was almost an answer.

To the doer had come success. On this success he would climb to greater successes. And all of this he could bring to Joan. She should be shielded, protected and given the best. All the spoils of his endeavor he would share with her. And all of his endeavor should be an expression of his love for her. Even the power-site which he had undertaken for his father had become the first in a long chain of successes which he should place before her.

It was one hundred miles to the railroad and by paddling from daylight to dark of the long days, and by carrying only the necessities, Wallace and Frank were able to reach the station the night of the second day. Wallace was not an expert with the paddle but to him the journey was a race. Frank's purely professional view-point was made adequate to the strain by a promise of double pay if they completed the journey in two days.

The capitalist, and representative of capital, who had come in answer to Wallace's telegram, arrived on the night train and the next morning, with a second canoe and two canoemen, the return journey was begun. In camp at night and as they journeyed side by side through the day, Wallace and Daniel Madison discussed the project. The young engineer's enthusiasm could not but have its effect. He stated frankly at the beginning that the site was almost too ideal to be true. They passed through the clay belt which Wallace had inspected on his way up to the falls, and as a consequence three days were required for the journey.

But in those three days Wallace knew that he had won half the battle. He saw Madison make many notes in a little book. He was called upon to answer innumerable questions, questions which, he knew, meant a growing interest and, later, a dawning conviction.

And Wallace's work had been thorough. He knew the area of the clay beds, the depth of the clay at various points. He had worked out a possible route for a spur from the railroad which could be built at comparatively small cost. He had gathered from the railroad's own meteorological records the necessary data relative to the climate and the possibilities of year-around work. He had even mapped out, through a chain of small lakes with connecting bits of muskeg, a route for teams to haul the first

machinery and equipment to the falls, on the ice.

"Your work has been thorough, and I imagine your figures are all right, even if you have gathered them in so short a time," Madison said the second night as they sat beside the camp-fire. "The only thing that bothers me now is the falls itself. I have been interested in a half-dozen water-power-sites but never have I heard of anything like this. In a way, it is better than Niagara.

"But—" and he made an effort to impress every word upon the engineer—"it must be all you say, every bit of it. If the turbines can be installed without more expense than you have estimated, if the water is unlimited and unfailing, if there is no necessity to put in expensive dams, dig long canals or tunnels or install long pentstocks, even at this distance from the railroad the plant can be built at less than the usual cost per horse-power.

"I've been looking into this aluminum business too, and there is a future in it. With the power-plant and the clay beds so close together, and so much of them both, there is no reason why we can't turn out a large quantity. And you're right about the world needing more of it. A big war would eat it up. Where did you get all this future stuff, young fellow? It seems to me you are pretty young to have done so much looking around and looking ahead."

It was the opportunity for which Wallace had waited many years. To a hard-headed, experienced, successful man he could tell the visions which had only discredited his father. He told them briefly, simply, but no manner of telling could hide the pathos or the beauty of the real story of David Searles and his son.

Business, that impersonal thing, posing always as being cold, heartless, unfeeling, was forced to drop its mark, if even for an instant. But in that instant it showed that it, too, like everything else human, everything else with which man is connected, has a heart and a soul.

"*Manaña* is what we have always had to contend with in Central America," commented Madison. "The American business man hates 'tomorrow.' And yet if some few men, like your father, hadn't been thinking of tomorrow, and not today, there would have been precious little business left for the rest of us. I wonder if the dreamer ever will receive due credit."

Despite the severe physical exertion of the previous four days, Wallace was up early the next morning and rushing preparations for the start.

Some time that afternoon he would lead Madison out on to the bare rock at the top of the gorge and show him the falls, the falls that gave so immense an impression of power with the great lake stretching out behind. He knew that one look would win. From there everything essential could be seen, and Madison had committed himself sufficiently already to assure success.

Wallace could not restrain his impatience or elation. Madison, recalling the young man's story of the night before, smiled as he watched him hurrying the Indians through the packing and into the canoes.

"Youth and dreams," he thought. "Youth and dreams. They are the sparks that light the gas that make the wheels go round."

Wallace's route lay straight north. By a long lake it would carry him to a short portage across which he would strike the river opposite the mouth of the slough on which he had first camped. The river would be the first surprise to Madison. He would come upon it unexpectedly at the last bend in the trail, although the roar of the falls would be in his ears for some time before that. Deep, strong and swift, smoothing itself out after the catapult from the heights and the hissing, angry, tossing dash through the rapids, it was a fitting indicator of other things to follow.

Then, according to the engineer's plan, they would paddle up the slough and take the trail Wallace himself had made up to the top of the ridge and out to the flat rock at the top of the gorge. It was done. He had kept faith with his father. He could go to Joan, perhaps that very night.

It was two o'clock of the third day out from the railroad when they began the portage from the lake into the river. There was an easier, shorter portage into the bay of the great lake on which Fleenor had his trading-post, but Wallace wanted Madison to see the falls first from the top of the gorge.

As they landed he told Frank and the other two canoemen to bring the packs and the second canoe and make camp on the slough. With the lighter of the canoes on

his own shoulders and Madison at his heels, he started on ahead.

Up over a ridge went the trail and then down on the other side to the river. It was a warm afternoon. The black flies gathered in swarms beneath the canoe. But Wallace hardly noticed these things as he hurried on with his burden. Down the last slope he almost ran, and on the rocky shore he set down the canoe, his back to the stream, and saw that Madison was just behind him.

But the look he had expected to see on Madison's face was not there. Instead there was amazement, growing anger. Suddenly Wallace realized that, in his excitement, he had not heard the deep roar of the falls only half a mile up the stream. He turned quickly to the river.

Here and there were small, shallow pools of water. Rocks covered with drying marine growth were scattered from shore to shore. In the rapids just above there was a little trickle of water. Otherwise the river bed was dry.

Wallace, failing to comprehend, believing he surely must have taken the wrong trail, that the river was just beyond, stood looking at the place where the great stream had been. He could not move, could not think, even when Madison asked angrily:

"Is this your inexhaustible river?"

"It was here," protested Wallace. "Only five days ago I paddled across it at this place."

"And you have brought me all this way, through all these flies and mosquitoes and these swamps and that cramped canoe to show me the dry bed of a river!" exclaimed Madison.

"But the falls must be there. With that big lake behind them they could not go dry. Come. I'll show you."

He led the way across the deep bed of the river, climbing over great boulders and leaping across the shallow pools of water. On the opposite side he turned north along the bank, climbing the ridge impatiently, in a bewilderment of fear and anxiety and despair.

"Wait a minute," called Madison from behind. "I'm not a goat that can climb mountains, even if you have made the other kind of me. Give me a hand here."

Wallace helped the older man up the rough places and then led the way along the top of the ridge toward the falls. As he approached, his courage became less and less. The roar that had always filled the gorge and crowded out and spread over the surrounding country was absent. It seemed like another place without that sullen, ceaseless impact of the water on the rocks so far below. Now there was only the noise of their own progress through the brush.

At last they emerged upon the flat rock. Wallace rushed forward, Madison, puffing, angry, following more slowly. Straight to the gorge the engineer ran, only to stop at the edge and stare in amazement.

Before him stretched the lake, the surface of which was six or seven feet lower than when he had last seen it. Between the lake and the gorge was a wide, even-topped ridge of rock holding back the water. Where the cataract had been there was not even a trickle of water.

The falls were no more.

CHAPTER IX

THE RIVALS

MADISON walked to Wallace's side, took one look and then turned back to the rock on which the young engineer had found Joan. He was out of breath because of the unaccustomed exertion, but his anger alone would not have permitted him to speak.

Wallace, however, was oblivious of this, even of his presence. Coming so quickly upon the heels of what he had believed was assured success, the catastrophe was greater than he could comprehend. He could not even bring his practical mind to bear on the phenomenon and try to deduce its cause. He only knew that the falls were gone, that his hopes were wrecked, that his father's vision was nothing more than a chimera, that he had nothing to offer Joan.

At last Madison recovered his breath and controlled his temper sufficiently to speak.

"What was your game, young man?" he asked coldly. "You got me up here on false pretenses. Now what do you want?"

Wallace did not need to reply. The face he turned toward Madison was sufficiently convincing. The utter dejection and bewilderment were unmistakable. The older man looked at him steadily a moment and then said quietly:

"Perhaps it's my fault, taking the word of a man with so little experience. And I guess you're on the square. It's just a plain case of your overlooking some weak place in the shore line. The river has broken out somewhere else."

"But rivers don't do such things in a day, in this country," protested Wallace. "It's impossible in such a formation. It could hardly wear out, let alone break out."

"Had any opposition, since you started this thing?" asked Madison suddenly.

"There was an indication of it, but I came to believe that it was only a coincidence. Besides, if there were opposition it would be from some one who wanted the site. A man doesn't ruin a thing like this just to keep some one else from getting it."

"What was this indication of opposition?"

"The fourth night I was here some one got my guide drunk and then went through my things. Or, at least, that's the way it looked when I got back. Frank was dead to the world and things in the tent had been scattered about as though some one were looking for something."

"Anything taken?"

"All my notes and figures on the falls."

"Seen any one around here?"

"Just the people at the mission across the river and the man who runs a trading-post half a mile beyond. But it can't be any one after the site. They wouldn't destroy it."

"What's the mission, Catholic?"

"No, it's a small one run by a young man named Bancroft. His father ran it before him. There is a Mrs. Knox who has been housekeeper since Bancroft was a boy, and a—a young lady, Miss Malloch, who was the older Bancroft's ward."

"No chance for opposition there."

Wallace started forward suddenly and was about to speak. Then he turned quickly away.

"What's your hunch now?" asked Madison.

"Nothing," was the reply, but there was in Wallace's mind a reconstructed picture of the grim, hard lines of Stanton Bancroft's face when he had told the missionary why he was in the country. He remembered, too, the outburst, the opposition implied rather than expressed. Bancroft wanted nothing new in the country. He did not care about the falls. He would rather see them destroyed than converted into useful power, anything rather than have his cursed Indians subjected to what he considered the evil influences of civilization.

Doubt and conviction struggled for a moment, but conviction won because Wallace must have some outlet for his anger, his chagrin, his complete sense of defeat. He turned back to Madison, who still sat on the rock.

"I suppose you're going back at once," he said.

"I don't see any reason for staying. I'll just charge up a week to profit and loss."

"Can't you give me another day—two more—three?"

"What for, in Heaven's name?"

"It may not be so bad. It can't be. Such a thing can't happen—not this way. It was too wonderful a thing just to disappear like that. Come here and look. You can see where the level of the lake was, that black line on the rocks. It will give you an idea of the volume of water that flowed over that natural rock dam there. You can see the fall. A good hundred feet. And straight. Not a ledge in the way."

Wallace, fired once more by the wonderful falls he had known, picturing them as he had seen them, went over in detail the plans he had made for the installation of the power-plant. Technical it was, but understood by the other, and his description and outline of the work that might have been were so vivid that they finally had their impression on Madison.

"It is quite unusual," he said when Wallace finally ceased speaking, "this being able to see the interior workings of a big falls."

"And it may prove a Godsend!" cried Wallace excitedly. "Don't you see? With the water at this level it will be possible to install the turbines without having to build coffer-dams."

"But why install them without water to turn them?"

"Don't you see? This river runs out of the lake somewhere. We need only find that place and fill it in. It wouldn't be much of a job."

Madison looked at the engineer closely for a moment.

"Young man," he finally said, "this is too good to be true. Things like this don't happen, is all. It's impossible.

You'll find that the new outlet of this lake is subterranean. It's more than probable, with the lake itself so high above the country around it."

"But it's worth trying for," pleaded Wallace.

"Yes, it's worth trying for. I'll give you three days to find out where your water's gone."

"Come on, then!" cried Wallace, leading the way back down the river. "Three days isn't much."

They scrambled back along the edge of the gorge until they were again at the mouth of the slough. Across the empty bed of the river they picked their way to where the three canoemen were staring in wonder at the phenomenon. Frank, excited, still incredulous, was talking almost hysterically of the river that had been there only a few days before.

"Make camp right here," Wallace commanded. "There is enough fresh water in the pools for several days. I'm going up to the mission, Mr. Madison, to learn when the level of the lake began to fall and if they know anything of it there."

"I wouldn't ask too many questions of any one," advised Madison. "If there is any opposition to your work we want to find out where it is coming from."

JOAN came to the door when Wallace knocked.

"Oh!" she cried. "Have you seen it? What does it mean?"

"That's what I don't know," he replied. "I got back less than an hour ago and there wasn't any falls."

He was so different than when she had last seen him the girl's heart went out to him in a surge of tenderness. The confidence, the exultation, the assurance, the expectancy, with which he had left her, all were gone. He was almost humble in his dejection now, and there was a restraint in his manner and words that told too plainly that their relations were not the same as when he had left.

To Joan, who had been waiting her lover's coming to encourage, to sympathize and to share with him in his defeat, this new attitude was both baffling and disappointing. She resented it a little, too, this recession on his part from the position he had taken with her, all because of a temporary setback in his business.

But after a moment's thought she realized what a blow to his pride and to his hopes he had suffered and she determined not to fail him at this time through want of understanding. Instead of allowing any expression of pique to creep into her answer, she went on in almost forced cheerfulness and in a real desire to help.

"But Wallace, it may be for the best after all. I don't know anything about engineering. But I've been over at the falls and it seems to me there is a wonderful opportunity for you to do your work there without being bothered by the water. And if you can only find out where the water went you can stop up that place and have your falls again."

"I have thought of that and have asked Mr. Madison to wait," he answered almost absently. "Is Mr. Bancroft here?"

Wallace did not intend his answer to be discourteous. In his disappointment and his angry desire to confront Bancroft he had not realized the spirit in which Joan had spoken, hardly had realized that a suggestion had been made. And because he had never before looked to Joan for help it did not occur to him now that she was offering this aid unasked. Nor did he comprehend the hurt behind the girl's short answer when she said simply:

"He is down at the beach mending a canoe, just around that point of spruce. I'll call him."

"No, please don't. I'll go."

He turned down the trail to the beach, leaving Joan at the door.

Stanton glanced up from the birch-bark canoe which he was repitching when he heard Wallace's step on the sand behind him.

"Hello, Searles," he greeted. "It's hard luck, and I'm sorry."

He extended his hand and there was no embarrassment in his eyes as he looked at the other. In the five days of Wallace's absence, Stanton had fought out with himself the situation that confronted him, had forced himself into an acceptance of his fate. He had thought it would be easier, after the long years of planning for Joan, but the final realization of the fact that he had lost her came as unexpectedly as though he had never considered it.

Still he had so mastered himself and his emotions that it was with perfect sincerity that he expressed his regret because of the

disaster that had overtaken the engineer. He was not, however, prepared for the attitude of the other.

"Just a minute, Bancroft," said Wallace, who seemed to be ignorant of the extended hand of the missionary. "There is a question I want to ask you first."

Stanton looked at him in amazement.

"I want to know," continued Wallace, "what you know about the change in level of this lake."

"I know nothing about it, other than that it started to go down within a day after you left and has been dropping steadily ever since. The last water went over the falls yesterday afternoon. Joan and I watched it."

Suddenly he realized what was back of Wallace's question and the shock of the idea stunned him for a moment. His face became white and his eyes lighted angrily. But when he spoke he did so quietly.

"That is partly my fault, Searles, and I am sorry," he said. "Twice I intended to speak to you, but both times I was interrupted, once when the Indians came that night of the fight and before that when you first spoke to me of your work here.

"Instinctively I was against your project. I didn't like the idea of bringing civilization to this place because I knew the kind of civilization that would come. It wouldn't be the best of it by any means, but the kind that always goes first. It is reckless, wasteful, often vicious, and I knew what the effect would be on my people and on the work my father has done.

"But I saw immediately, especially after Mrs. Knox told of my father's change, that I was wrong, that civilization had to come, that a few of us couldn't stand in the way of more happiness and prosperity for many others. And, as I thought more about it, I began to welcome the idea. It would mean a new problem for me, a new set of conditions to meet, something harder and something bigger. I—I need something like that now, Searles, and the sooner I can meet it the better. To keep my people as they are in spite of civilization, that is a big job for any man, and I am anxious to get at it."

There was no mistaking the sincerity of the young missionary. His words impressed Wallace, even in his preoccupation over his own troubles, with the real strength and resolution of the man whom he had practically accused of wrecking his hopes. His shame and remorse were great, but his courage was equal to the occasion. He thrust out his hand impulsively and grasped Stanton's.

"I beg your pardon, old man," he said. "I'm mighty sorry. I think I have been thrown a little off my balance. If I had used my head I would have known you wouldn't have had anything to do with the disappearance of the water. I'd really like to be friends with you. I hope there isn't any reason why we can't be friends."

Stanton for a fleeting instant scented a mocking purpose back of the words, but as quickly he knew that the engineer was perfectly sincere. He could not know of Joan and himself since no one knew, not even Joan. He returned the handclasp warmly.

"No," he said slowly, and he smiled as he said it, "there isn't any reason why we shouldn't be friends, the best of friends."

CHAPTER X

"DO YOU UNDERSTAND WOMEN?"

ON HIS return to the mission the night Wallace Searles had received his telegram from Madison, Stanton Bancroft had not given up the fight against the whisky peddler. He had gone back for a fresh start, but the words he had heard as he paddled up to the beach in the darkness had taken the heart out of him more completely than had any failure in the other.

Despite all his planning for Joan, despite his willingness to eliminate himself that she might get the best, the actual culmination of such a plan brought with it too overpoweringly the knowledge of his own loss. He could make the arrangements to lose with a certain amount of courage and preparedness.

There was only the expectation of shock, not the shock itself, and now that it had come it found him, even after all his bracing to meet it, wholly unprepared. He simply had not realized that it was something for which he could not prepare.

Upon Wallace Searles's return, Stanton was confronted with the situation of standing by while he watched Joan in the other's presence. To escape this, to escape, if possible, from the entire situation, he threw

himself more energetically than before into the search for whisky. It might occupy his time and his thoughts. And, in any event, without Joan the Indians alone were his problem, his life, all he had.

Wallace Searles, granted three days of grace, was equally energetic. After the first shock of the disappearance of the falls had passed he began to look at the problem differently. He immediately gave up the idea of opposition. There could be no opposition except that of a man who, too, desired the site, and such a man would never ruin a project merely to keep it from another.

Some natural cause lay behind this strange occurrence, he convinced himself, though always the fact returned to disturb him afresh that the water began to go down as soon as he had departed for the railroad. Over and over again in his mind he turned the problem, and that first night he discussed it at great length with Madison.

But Wallace was not the sort that depends upon deduction or theory. There was one way, he knew, to find out, and that was to search the entire shore of the lake. Somewhere he would find the break that would tell where the water went. Somewhere he would see the river rushing out, digging for itself a new channel in the rocks and muskeg and among the spruce and pine.

Accordingly he was in the canoe at daylight the next morning with Frank in the stern. Roughly he had figured that it was thirty to forty miles around the shore. He had paddled it alone in two days. With an early start he and Frank should be able to do it between the rising and the setting of the sun. Confidently he set out with the expectation that he would be back at night with a solution of the riddle.

As a result of the activities of the two men, Joan was left alone the first day except for Mrs. Knox. As the day passed the feeling of emptiness, which she had first known upon the departure of Wallace for the railroad, returned with new force. The resentment she had felt because of his changed attitude after the disappearance of the falls obtruded itself into her thoughts.

Constantly she told herself that Wallace was not himself because of this blow to his hopes and plans. Repeatedly she turned her thoughts to the courage and devotion to a memory which had driven him into the wilderness, the very qualities which she admired, which had first attracted her to him. Frankly she dissected her own feelings and knew she was not jealous of this devotion to his father. And yet, after a day of such thoughts, the emptiness was greater, the resentment still there.

That night Stanton returned, but Wallace, if he had completed his circuit of the lake, did not come to the mission. The young missionary, throwing himself with renewed determination into his work, talked constantly of it that night after supper. Always he had shared his plans and his endeavor with Joan. Every detail of it he had been accustomed to talk over with her. Often he had looked to her for advice, for assistance.

But now, in this sudden zeal, this determination unusual even for Stanton, this reiteration of theories and plans, Joan sensed something beneath the surface. Her life had been spent with Stanton. There was no one in the world she knew so thoroughly, understood so well.

It puzzled her, this change in him, and as he talked more and more she grew silent, listening less and less. Various things came to her mind, little remarks by Mrs. Knox, half-forgotten incidents of a week or of several years before. She remembered something that had troubled her in her first year at college, the restraint in his letters when she had expected the same comradely intercourse that had always marked their life together.

And then suddenly, like a rocket shooting across the sky, bright, dazzling, where there had been darkness before, the truth came to Joan. Her first thought was one of reproach that her woman's intuition had not told her before, had not even given warning that Stanton loved her.

She looked over at him as he sat before her, so strong, so clean, so altogether lovable, and she could have cried out with the pity of it. Her comrade loving in vain!

She recalled the thoughtless hurts he had been given in the previous days, all his loneliness in her years at school. Yet never had he dimmed her happiness by allowing her to know. Not even when he might have kept her with him and won her love had he done so. Instead he had sent her out into the world and had tried to give her the best, the biggest, that could come to her.

In the ecstasy of her own new love there had been ever present a realization of how

close it might have come to a sorrow as great. Now this sorrow must come through her to Stanton. The hopelessness and injustice of it overwhelmed her.

But as her thoughts cleared she realized that Stanton must never know that she had guessed his secret. His sacrifice must be made to yield him all he wished in it, the thought of her complete happiness. Anxiously she began to cast about for some way to lessen this sorrow, and the thought of the Indians obtruded itself. She knew how much this problem meant to him, how much of his life and his efforts had been sunk in the work. Ever since her return she had intended to help and now her conscience hurt because her own happiness had rendered her so useless.

Characteristically, Joan began at once. She ended Stanton's wandering remarks with a few questions, just enough to piece out the information she had obtained from him before. A little later she went to bed, but not to sleep. By morning she had determined upon a campaign which, as she added clue to clue, became something more than a mere hazard. After breakfast she took a canoe and paddled away.

It was after supper-time when Joan returned to find Wallace at the mission. He forced a smile as he greeted her, but she read at once his story.

"Wallace!" she cried. "You didn't find it!"

He shook his head slowly and smiled again.

"No," he said, "I have spent two days paddling around the shore of the lake and I can't find a place where the water could get out. It begins to look like a subterranean channel."

"But look again," she urged quickly. "It is somewhere, and the water has stopped going down. Perhaps you missed it."

Common sense told her that a subterranean mouth of the river never would be found unless it drained the lake completely, and common sense told her that there was no subterranean outlet when the level of the water had again become stationary.

This idea had not occurred to Wallace, however. The fact that only twenty-four hours remained, that Madison would leave after another day, had thrown him into a frenzy of impatience and discouragement. Twice he had paddled around the entire shore. For two long days he and Frank had inspected every bay and arm and point. But nowhere in the high, rocky walls had there been an indication of a passage for the water.

He did not tell Joan that there was only one more day between absolute defeat and victory. He had so firmly conceived his love as the wooing of a successful man that to lose one meant, in his harassed mind, to lose the other. In Joan's presence he did not like even to think of it, and he turned the conversation with a polite query as to Stanton's success with the Indians.

Stanton arrived a moment later. At Joan's suggestion he had spent the day at Fleenor's trading-post, pretending to discuss the welfare of the Indians through the one subject that might interest the trader—the decrease in the amount of fur caught in the previous Winter—but watching always every Indian that came to the post to trade.

Wallace soon excused himself and went to his camp.

"It was no use, Joan," said Stanton when they sat down to a late supper. "Only the old chief came. He bought some tea and a little pork and some tobacco and left. He wasn't out of my sight from the time he came in his canoe until he paddled out of the bay."

"That was in the morning, wasn't it?" she asked.

"Yes. Why?"

"The chief and his squaw were both drunk in their camp this afternoon."

Stanton looked at her in amazement.

"Drunk! This afternoon!"

"And probably still are. I came away just a little while ago. I waited until they were both asleep and then searched the place, as you have done so many times."

"And you didn't find a trace of a bottle," added Stanton.

"No, not a trace."

THE next morning Joan was up early and away in her canoe before Stanton had returned to his watch at Fleenor's. He had protested against going back to the trader's but Joan had insisted and he had given in because he did not know what else to do.

"And keep watch of everything they buy," called Joan as she paddled away. "Tell me everything, even if it is only a buckskin needle."

Joan and Stanton returned together that

night, one from the east, the other from the west.

"What luck?" he called as their canoes drew together at the mouth of the bay. "Any bottles?"

She shook her head.

"No, but I'll race you to the beach."

They had had many such races in the old days and it was not without a thought that there would be no more that Stanton accepted the challenge. Perhaps it was his dejection that robbed him of the spirit to win, but Joan pulled away from him easily. Her short, quick strokes, her recovery like a flash of light, lifted her canoe so that it seemed fairly to ride on top of the water. Breathless, laughing, she reached the beach, drew the canoe broadside with a swirl of the paddle, and stepped out before Stanton had touched the sand.

"I didn't know you could paddle like that," came a voice from behind her, and she turned to see Wallace standing there.

"Not paddle, and living all my life in the North country!" she exclaimed. And then she added:

"Did you find it?"

Wallace shook his head.

"Where did you look today?"

"I took the south shore and didn't miss a foot of it."

"There is no chance there," said Stanton, who had come up. "That's all higher ground. The slope is the other way, toward the north and west."

"But I had gone over that in the two days before. There is something uncanny about this."

"And the whisky, too," answered Stanton.

"What did they buy today?" asked Joan.

"Nothing much. A little tea and a little tobacco."

"Did you keep them in sight every minute?"

"Every minute. Only two families came, and neither they nor Fleenor were out of my sight or hearing in all the time they were there."

"And there wasn't a bottle?" asked Joan.

"There aren't any bottles, or jugs or glasses or kegs!" exclaimed Stanton in despair. "There wasn't even a tin can in what those Indians got today, or any other day, so far as I have been able to learn."

Joan looked from one of the young men to the other. Despair was so evident in each face she impulsively reached out a hand to each.

But immediately she drew them back and, running up the beach between the two, began to laugh. It was a whole-souled, hearty, genuine laugh, a merry, happy laugh, the sudden burst that comes from joy and a joke and tenderness. Stanton and Wallace looked at each other with quick questions in their eyes.

"Do you understand women?" asked the engineer. "I don't. I don't think either of us could find a laugh like that anywhere in our systems. It would be the hardest thing for me to do right now, to laugh. And this whisky business seems to have you in the same boat."

"No, I don't understand women," replied Stanton slowly as he watched Joan running to the house. "Only I think I do understand Joan. If I can judge by the past, she has a joke on me. I knew it out at the mouth of the bay when she dared me to race."

"Perhaps it is just as well," said Wallace. "It's not their game, the things men have to buck up against. They are spared it, and they ought to be. We can't expect them to take our troubles seriously, and I'm glad they don't. Now, I don't want to burden you any more, for you seem to have your hands full, but I came over to ask if you know of any possible place where the river might have broken out of the lake. You have lived here so long you probably know every foot of the ground."

Stanton turned and looked out over the water, sketching in his own mind the varied and intricate shore-line.

"It's this way with me," Wallace continued when the missionary did not reply. "Madison is the man who is going to finance this if it suits him. He gave me three days to find where the river went to. The three days are up. He goes back in the morning. It means the end for me.

"I don't care so much for myself, but it has been sort of a religion with me, putting this thing through for my father's sake. I've got to do it, Bancroft. I can't lose. And tomorrow morning he goes back to the railroad. If you could give me some idea, some hint as to where it could be, I might be able to get him to stay one more day."

"You tried that west shore?"

"Every foot of it. Twice now."

"There's where I'd look for it. It's the

only place it could be. If it isn't there I don't know where it could be, unless it's under the surface somewhere."

"That's what Madison claims has happened. I've fought the idea because it meant absolute failure. But I guess he's right, and you're right."

Wallace turned up the trail to the house and Stanton walked silently at his side. For a moment he saw in the failure of the engineer a chance for his own happiness. But instantly he reproached himself for the thought.

"I'm sorry, Searles," he said at last. "I'd help if I could. If you had told me sooner I would have taken a few days and hunted too. I didn't know there was such a hurry. Won't you come in for supper?"

"No, thanks. I must have a talk with Madison tonight. I landed here because it was the nearest way to camp. I'll see you again."

The next morning Stanton balked at another day at Fleenor's trading-post.

"There's no use, Joan," he protested. "I'm talked out with the man and there's nothing to be found there, unless he keeps that breed of his, Louis Debeau, out in the bush with the whisky and peddles it that way. But I saw those Indians paddle from out across the lake yesterday and I saw them paddle back, and there wasn't a chance. I tell you, that whisky is somewhere else on the lake. If it's Fleenor, as you seem to think, he keeps it in another place, and he's mighty clever about it, too."

"Are you sure you haven't paddled right by it?" asked Joan.

Stanton looked at her sharply. Something in her tone told him that she did not mean the mere physical paddling past a cache of whisky on shore.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"I thought you might be like Mr. Searles," was the reply.

"I guess I am. He's lost out. Lost last night, or this morning, rather."

"Lost!" cried Joan. "What do you mean?"

"Why, Mr. Madison, who was to finance the project, gave him until last night to find the lost river. He didn't find it, and Madison starts back this morning for the railroad. Without Madison's capital, Searles is helpless. Why, what's the matter, Joan?"

She had been staring at him, at first incredulously, then fearfully.

"What is it?" repeated Stanton.

"Nothing," she replied, her tone without expression. "Only I found the lost river yesterday afternoon. That's what I was laughing about last night."

"Found it!" repeated Stanton in amazement. "Then why on earth didn't you tell him?"

"I don't know exactly why I didn't," replied Joan.

CHAPTER XI

THE NEW RIVER

WHEN Wallace Searles returned to his camp beside the dry bed of the river the evening of the third day, his failure was almost forgotten in a sudden determination to win despite the apparent hopelessness of the situation. He walked straight to where Madison was sitting on a windfall in front of his tent.

"I didn't find it, Mr. Madison," he said. "I searched the entire south and east shore carefully but there wasn't an indication. I want one more day in which to go over the north and west shore again.

"You've been there twice already, haven't you?"

"Yes, but there is still a chance, and it must be on that side of the lake. The watershed slopes that way."

"I think this particular watershed slopes straight down, young man," was the curt rejoiner. "I guessed right the first time when I said it was a subterranean outlet."

Wallace remembered what Joan had said the night before and caught the meaning behind her words.

"But that's impossible," he protested. "If there were an outlet under the surface, in the bottom of the lake, the water would all drain out, or drain down to the level of the outlet. But it has been absolutely stationary since we came. There is a stake on the mission beach that marks it."

"Unless it filled up some subterranean cavity."

"Then the water in the lake would regain its old level. It has only eight feet to come up."

"Young man," said Madison severely, "get down to earth. Do you think for a minute that, if that were true, I'd sink my

money in a proposition the bottom of which is liable to fall out at any time? There are plenty of water-power sites in the States and Canada where you can be sure of what you've got without having to take a chance on this."

Wallace felt the futility of arguing further. He knew he had nothing but conjecture to present, and this man accustomed only to reality, only to facts, with a mind trained only for the absorption of facts, could be moved by nothing less.

"And you won't give me another day?" the engineer asked.

"Just about one more hour. I've been talking with these men"—and he nodded toward the two breeds who had paddled him from the railroad—"and they tell me that tomorrow the wind is going to blow and we have two big lakes to cross. They want to start tonight, right after supper. They say the night-time is the best for travel in this country anyhow, and it suits me because I'll get out to a shave and a clean shirt all the sooner. No, we start in an hour."

It was the end. Until then Wallace had hoped, had seen a chance. Now failure was absolute. With Madison gone he might as well go. His father's dream, his own life's ambition, even Joan and his future happiness, were wiped out.

In the blackness of this despair he turned away and walked slowly to the edge of what had once been the river. Without seeing it he looked across the dry rocks on which the slime and marine growth had been baked by the sun. There came to his eyes only that memory of his father that had remained so clear and distinct ever since their final parting.

"They think I'm crazy, boy. But it's there. Show them."

Wallace turned suddenly and strode back to the promoter.

"Look here, Mr. Madison," he began, and there was something in his tone that made the other glance up quickly. "I'm not blaming you. You came solely on my word that there was a big thing up here in the wilderness. You got here and there wasn't anything except a dry river bed. On the whole, I think you've been pretty decent, and I appreciate it. It was decent of you to stay here three days after you saw what had happened to the falls, and I won't ask you to stay any longer. But——"

He stopped and turned his head to one side as if listening for the roar which had always filled the gorge near the end of which they were camped. When he began to speak again the quick, decided tone was lacking. It was more of a reverie than a statement.

"I'll admit I'm not interested so much in the financial end of this thing, except to see that it could be done cheaply. That isn't what sent me up here into this country. I'm not fond of it and never have been one who belonged in these out-of-the-way places.

"I told you a little something of why I came. Every since I was a boy in short pants I've been thinking about these falls. I had them pictured in my mind, from what I had heard about the place, and that picture was so true it seemed natural when I first saw them. I wasn't surprised by anything. They were exactly as I knew they would be.

"All the time I was in high school and afterward in college there were few days that I didn't think about the falls and the big lake back of them. They got to be part of me, or the harnessing of them did, and as I look back on it now nothing else ever seemed to count for much before this.

"You see, no one ever understood my father. I don't think he tried very hard to make himself understood. I think he was more of a poet than anything else, only he didn't write his poems. He only thought them, and dreamed them. And all the time, too, I think he realized that he could only dream. Every one said he was a failure and in time he came to believe it, too, I'm afraid perhaps that was the trouble.

"Even my mother, I am sure, never understood him. She was too much like her father, too practical. There wasn't any room for theory or visions in grandfather's life. I've often thought that mother might have done differently, might have furnished the things my father lacked, and, together, they might have accomplished wonders. But she never understood him, and grandfather never did, and I think it was their plan that I was to forget him. They never mentioned him, never told me things about him, and all that I know is what I remember, what I saw myself.

"Maybe I wasn't old enough to judge. Maybe I was wrong. But I can't believe it. He was my father, Mr. Madison, and

to me he is still a wonderful man. Somehow I've taken it upon myself to show the world that he was, to show that he wasn't a failure. That's one thing I always planned on, naming this power-plant after him. That's why I was willing to accept so little for my work that he would get his due. My grandfather left me enough so that I could do it, and there was some satisfaction in that, too, to make grandfather help in the end.

"So, you see, Mr. Madison, why I can't give this thing up. I've got to stay and find out what became of the water. I can't go back until I know absolutely that there is no hope. It would haunt me, always thinking that perhaps I overlooked something, that a mistake on my part was the cause of failure. I've got to stay and find out for sure. I've got to find that river."

He stopped and looked back at the dry bed of the stream. Madison did not speak.

"What I intended to say," Wallace continued at last, "is just this. I'm going to stay. If I find anything I'll write or wire you. I won't do it unless I'm certain it's all right. That will give you first chance. If you're not interested I'll go somewhere else."

"I'm going out tonight, as I said," Madison declared as he arose and strode to the place where the guides had set out the supper.

Half-way he stopped and wheeled suddenly.

"And look here, Searles," he said, "if you find things are all right after all, that there is no serious damage to the proposition, and it is a sure thing in the future, wire me at once and I'll get busy at Ottawa on the necessary rights. I'm a good deal like the grandfather you told me about, I guess, but this dream's too strong for me. I could almost believe it myself, and I believe enough to take your word that things are all right. There's one thing that's bigger than business, and you've got it in this case. Come on. Let's eat."

IMMEDIATELY after supper Madison and his guides started across the portage. Wallace did not feel that his three days of grace were being curtailed by this hurried departure. He and Frank had traveled at night on the way up to escape heavy winds, and he walked across the portage with the others.

Something in what Madison had said, something in the spirit refired by his own words, had kindled anew the determination to find the lost river. This man, who talked and thought only in dollars, was ready to believe. Somehow, he could not fail.

Wallace was very tired, and immediately upon his return to camp he and Frank went to bed. For eight days they had been spending long hours in the canoe and the engineer, at least, had not realized how much he had taxed his strength.

They slept late in the morning and the sun had been shining on their tent for several hours before they arose.

His head aching from the close, stuffy heat that only the man who has slept in a tent in the sun can know, his mouth parched and his clothes wet with perspiration, Wallace hurried down to the largest of the pools that remained below the rapids and took a plunge. It relieved him somewhat but the dull ache remained in his head and left him open to the demons of depression.

The spiritual uplift of the night before was gone. He was back on earth again with the knowledge that a thorough search of the shore-line had practically proven that he could not find the lost river. Idly he watched Frank prepare breakfast. Without an appetite he sat down to the meal. He had drained his coffee-cup when Frank looked up sharply. Wallace, following the direction of the breed's glance, saw a small Indian boy coming toward them. In his right hand was a piece of paper which he hesitatingly extended toward the white man.

Wallace took it wonderingly. The writing meant nothing to him and he unfolded the single sheet to look curiously at the signature.

"Joan."

Instantly he turned back to the beginning. The falls were forgotton. The girl he loved had written him her first letter. Before he had begun to read he pictured its contents. Something light, something cheering, an expression of sympathy probably because of her laughter at his failure the night before, the time she had not understood. But there was nothing in the note that he expected. There was not even a salutation. It read:

Paddle west along the shore to the first big bay, up in the northwest corner. Go clear to the end

of the bay, straight up to the high rock. Keep so close to this rock you can touch it with your paddle and then keep on going, following the rock around its north end. There you'll find the lost river. I'm sorry I didn't tell you last night. JOAN.

Scarcely comprehending or believing, Wallace read it through a second time. Then, leaping to his feet, he called to his guide—

"Come on, Frank! Quick— We've got it!"

"Got what?" was the uninterested reply.

"The lost river! Come! Hurry! I've got to get there and see it, see what it means, what can be done with it."

Wallace started up the trail to the mission and Frank, hesitating over the breakfast dishes, at last turned and followed. When he arrived at the mission he found Wallace turning over the canoe which they had left on the beach the night before. Despite his hurry, the young engineer had stopped to ask for Joan. But Mrs. Knox had told him that she had left alone in a canoe, a half-hour before.

On the three-mile journey to the bay Joan had described, Wallace's thoughts were equally divided between joy that the missing river had been found and bewilderment that Joan had neither told of her discovery the previous evening nor had remained at the mission to give him the details.

Of all the mystifying acts of this baffling girl, he found this the most inexplicable. This, then, was the reason for that mischievous laughter the night before. And then the remembrance of that light-hearted laugh brought a wave of understanding tenderness. In spite of all her sympathy and encouragement she had neither realized the importance of the power-site in his life, in his future, nor the necessity of speed. And now she had gone to the bay she had written of, to meet him there at the scene of his triumph.

Smiling at the thought, he looked up to see that they had already turned into the bay. Silently the two men paddled straight on to the extreme end. Even the breed felt the poignancy of the moment.

As they neared the high, straight rock, Wallace, who had been searching the shore-line eagerly, studying the ridges and hills behind it, felt his first misgivings. Could Joan have been playing a trick on him? This was the bay. There was the high rock at the end of it. There was no other deep bay anywhere near the northwest corner of the lake. It was the place she had described in her note.

But as for a river—there was no possible chance for one to get out there. The ridges rose high behind the rock, and the rock stretched straight across the end of the bay. It was a hoax, he knew, but he could not comprehend how Joan could do such a thing. He stopped paddling and looked ahead. It was useless going farther. Common sense told him there was no way for the lake to empty its waters through such a barrier.

Frank, too, stopped paddling and the canoe drifted. Wallace, still hoping more that his faith in Joan might not be shaken than with any expectation of finding the river, sat motionless, looking at the wall before him. He had paddled over the same spot the morning of the first day of his search. Again on the second day he and Frank had conscientiously skirted the shore. He remembered the place very well because a south wind had given them fifteen minutes of hard work to get out to the lake again, and the waves had splashed and dashed against the flat wall of the rock.

SUDDENLY Wallace realized that the canoe was continuing to drift straight on, though neither he nor Frank was paddling. He looked at the rock and saw that he was moving rapidly. A glance at the water told that there was not a ripple at the bow of the canoe. Still the canoe went on, faster now.

"It's the current!" whispered Frank excitedly from the stern. The current, she carry us. See!"

Wallace dipped his paddle frantically.

"Come on, Frank!" he called. "Right beside the rock. Keep her close."

The current and their own efforts carried them on along the base of the cliff straight toward the end of the bay. There the high rock ended, the usual North country shore-line began again, circling back along the north side of the bay.

They reached the end of the rock, but there was a gap. Their canoe was whirled quickly about and they found themselves traveling toward the southwest in a narrow, steep-walled ravine.

"It's the river, Frank!" shouted Wallace almost hysterically. "It's the river, and

we've found it. How did we ever miss it before?"

"The wind, she make us miss," was the reply. "It blow from the south both times when we come in here, and we no see the current around the rock. Today the wind she blow from the west and there ain't any waves in this bay."

"But who'd ever think there was a passage behind that high rock?"

"Oh, lots places like that in this country," was the matter-of-fact reply. "Me know places only Indian know. Down in lower country there two lakes, Kabetogama and Sand Point, and stranger he never find way out of either those lakes."

They had swept on through the ravine until a roar from ahead warned them that rapids or falls were in front. The river turned sharply back toward the northwest, around the end of a ridge, and Wallace saw the white line of foam ahead. Frank turned the canoe to the south bank and they got out.

"That explains it," said Wallace as he looked at the end of the low ridge across the river and at the higher ridge on the west. "From out there in the bay you'd never see this slit we're in now, or suspect it was here."

But instantly his interest turned to the question of why the river had suddenly sought this new channel. He had noticed, after passing the turn around the high rock, that even in the ravine there was abundant evidence of the water having been there before. At least this much of the new river had existed as a quiet slough, unnoticed and unseen, perhaps unknown even to those at the mission notwithstanding their intimate knowledge of the lake.

He turned at once to the falls, just below. After he had scrambled along the shore to their crest his first glance down the tumbling, white water told the story. Uprooted trees, green branches swishing up and down in the turbulent water, the tips of small spruce beyond in the quiet water at the foot, all were instant proclaimers of a new channel.

The engineer's mind turned at once to the cause and he looked across the head of the falls. There, freshly broken, was the same soft rock that had formed the ledge beneath Curtain Falls, where he had first seen Joan.

Instantly the situation came to him. This softer rock, out-cropping so strangely in a land of flint-like granite, had at last given way before the pressure of water from the lake. At the very moment when he believed success was at hand this simple process of nature, inexorable in its very leisure, had wrecked his hopes.

Only, in the same instant, his engineer's mind grasped the simple problem of restoring the dam which nature no longer could maintain. A few hundred pounds of dynamite under the ledges above him, perhaps a little cement work, and the new river could be obliterated, the old one restored. And in the meantime, with the empty falls at the power-house site, the work of installation could go on without the usual difficulties attending such operations.

He had seen enough and there had come the sudden idea that, by traveling steadily for two days, he could overtake Madison at the railroad. Eagerly he turned back to the canoe, calling to Frank to join him.

But the guide was not anywhere in sight. Wallace called again, but the noise of the falls and the rapids prevented his voice from carrying far. He searched along the shore and at last caught sight of the breed high up above the river looking down at the new watercourse. Then he turned and saw his employer and waved to him.

Wallace shook his head and motioned for the man to come down. But Frank remained where he was and pointed into the brush behind him. Irritated, Wallace repeated his semaphoric commands, but Frank continued to shake his head and motion behind him.

Seeing that he could not make the man understand, Wallace began to climb to where he stood higher up the ridge and above the falls. When at last he scrambled through the brush to the rock on which Frank was standing, the guide merely signaled to him to follow.

"But I want to catch the others before they get to the railroad," protested Wallace irritably.

"Wait," replied Frank calmly. "You come here minute. Me show you something."

He turned into the brush and began to climb farther. Wallace, because there was nothing else to do, followed. After a few yards he came to an open, level place, in the center of which Frank was standing, looking at something on the ground.

"See that," said the guide as he pointed. "That what make new river. I guess somebody don't like you, eh?"

Wallace hurried forward. A splintered board was sticking upright in the moss on a rock as though it had fallen there. In red letters, parts of some missing because of the peculiarly jagged outlines of the board, was the word—DYNAMITE.

CHAPTER XII

JOAN FINDS A CLUE

AFTER Joan had sent her note to Wallace Searles she went at once to Mrs. Knox.

"I am going over to the trading-post, aunty," she said. "Is there anything you want except the tea?"

"We can do without that if you'll let Stanton go instead," was the reply. "I tell you, that man is a wolf and no one for you to know."

"Why, you never spoke that way of any one before, aunty. Men in the bush never harm any one."

"But he's not of the bush. He says he is, but I know he's not. I know North country men too well."

Joan turned and walked slowly out of the door. It was seldom that she failed to heed any wish of her foster aunt, but her plans that morning were important and they necessitated that she go to Fleenor's. Even before Stanton had told her of Madison's departure she had planned to go. Now she wanted to start at once because, somehow, she did not wish to be there when Wallace appeared. Since the delayed announcement had resulted so disastrously she felt ashamed of the spirit of mischief that had made her withhold the news.

Joan's discovery of the new river course had been entirely an accident. She had gone to visit an Indian family on the north shore of the lake and on the way home had been reminded of her route by the queer little turn in the northwest bay which she and Stanton had discovered many years before. She knew that it would never be seen by any one unless they paddled within a few feet of the cliff as the end of the big rock merged so naturally with the shore on the other side. There were many places like it in that country of rocky-shored lakes, and it would be easily possible for a novice woodsman to pass it without a thought.

She and Stanton had discovered it when they were children and were pursuing an otter which they had cornered at the end of the bay. They were positive he had not come up on the shore or passed under them. As they paddled in, each watching closely for the bright eyes to appear above the surface, Joan, who was in the bow, had seen the water behind the rock.

Around the end they had paddled and into the steep-walled ravine.

"It's a river!" Joan had exclaimed.

"But it doesn't flow," Stanton had objected. "It's just a blind bay. Who would ever have thought it was here?"

They had continued on to the end, just around the first bend back toward the northwest, and then without stopping had gone back to the lake and the mission. Neither had ever visited the place since, and it was doubtful if either had ever thought of it half a dozen times.

On her way home from the Indian family, Joan, hugging the shore to avoid the west wind, had paddled a little way into the bay. For the first time in years she recalled the peculiar twist at the head and instantly had swung her bow toward it. She had seen immediately that Wallace and his guide, seeking a possible break through the shore, could have passed the place and never suspected it.

The first grip of the current as she swung around the rock told her that she had solved the mystery of the missing river. The next moment the murmur of the rapids confirmed the discovery. When white water sent her ashore, one glance at the new channel was enough. The next moment she was struggling back against the stream and out into the bay.

Her first emotion was only the joy that a woman feels when she has helped her mate to triumphant achievement. Her only thought was to reach Wallace and tell him the wonderful news.

And then as she paddled toward the mission the thought of Wallace's changed attitude, of his calm assumption of her uselessness in his business project, of his almost curt reception of her suggestion of the ease of a waterless installation of the power-plant, came to her and rankled as they never had before.

With Wallace successful, she could not be so forgiving as with Wallace discouraged,

broken by this mysterious failure that had come upon him. A desire to allow him to suffer a little longer, now that her own anxiety was removed, had prompted the idea of delaying the news. But it was not until she met Wallace at the beach that night that she had actually given in to the spirit of mischief and run laughingly off.

Even then, had he followed and shown in his manner that he wanted her aid, she would have ended his anxiety. In fact, she had felt a vague disappointment that he had not done so.

But neither the discovery of the missing river nor the possible pique of Wallace because of her mischievous silence were occupying Joan's thoughts as she paddled slowly down the shore to Fleenor's trading-post. The journey which had resulted in finding the river had been undertaken only with the idea of aiding Stanton. And while it had not accomplished what Joan had confidently hoped it would, it had given her some clues which, she felt, might lead to ultimate success.

Part of this evidence she had told to Stanton the previous evening, but the big idea it had engendered in her own mind she had kept to herself until she could produce something to confirm her theory. For the whisky problem had already been the source of too much discouragement for her to add the bitter disappointment of false hopes.

Joan's journey of the day before to the wigwam of Mock-a-net had been made in the confident hope that from this friend of her girlhood she would learn the source of the Indians' degradation. The visit would have been made days before had she not believed that Mock-a-net, with her father and mother, were on a distant lake trapping bear.

For this girl in particular, Joan had been more than a teacher and adviser. Of the same age, with two languages in common, seeing much of each other in the mission school, a strange friendship had grown up between them. There was nothing of patronage, nothing of inequality, in it, but rather it was one of those adoring intimacies found wherever there are young girls to establish it. To Joan it had opened up the Indian mind and Indian knowledge, while in Mock-a-net it had inculcated more than anything else could, a desire to be like white women in personal habits and industry.

It was Joan's example that had kept Mock-a-net from joining the other women in their smoking. It was Joan's energetic housekeeping under the supervision of Mrs. Knox that had made Mock-a-net so industrious in the maintenance of a well-ordered wigwam. Stanton's father had often declared that if he only had a friend for every Indian there would be no need for a mission.

Joan, remembering their reunion in her first vacation, so filled with long, girlish confidences and protestations of affection, naturally turned to Mock-a-net with her problem. And as she approached the familiar stand of pine which had hidden for so many Summers the wigwam of her friend she found herself looking forward in a greater degree than she had anticipated to the resumption of the old intimacy.

Consequently it was with more than a shock to Joan that the first sight she should have upon landing was that of Mock-a-net with a pipe in her mouth. And in that first moment of greeting she realized that the pipe was only a bit of evidence of the complete recession of her friend.

The unkempt clothing, the disorderly wigwam, the dirty cedar boughs before the door, the swarming flies about the rack of drying meat, all told instantly that Mock-a-net, too, had fallen victim to the whisky. In the stolid welcome, the listless manner of the girl, there was a blow not only to the friendship that had existed but to the confident expectation that here would be help in Stanton's problem.

For Joan knew the Indian character too well to hope that she would receive information from Mock-a-net. And with this depressing discovery came the realization that only by their ability to piece the truth from scattered bits of evidence could she and Stanton ever be able to find and punish the distributor of the whisky.

While she talked to this unkempt squaw who had once been her girlhood friend, Joan's eyes, Indian fashion, were observing everything about the camp—the almost empty provision bags, the one small roll of caribou hide and the sleeping, apparently drunken, forms of Mock-a-net's father and mother.

Gradually Joan became aware of a change in her companion. The listlessness gave way to vivacity. Her moroseness changed to garrulity. Brightly, almost excitedly, Mock-a-net began to tell of the trapping of

the previous Winter, the gathering about the lake in Summer. Only none of the facts rang true. Numbers were overestimated. Success was exaggerated.

But it was not until Mock-a-net described the harvest dance, which had not yet been held, to go into details, to enumerate the Indians gathered, to tell the number of moose that were killed, the berries that were found, the fish that were caught in the nets, that Joan realized that her companion was not deliberately falsifying but suffering rather from an hallucination.

Joan, listening intently, soon saw another change in the Indian girl. She spoke more slowly. Her thoughts began to waver, her sentences to be disjointed, her ideas hopelessly mixed. At last, without explanation, she dropped off to sleep, tumbling back upon the rumpled blankets.

WHEN she was certain that Mock-a-net would not waken, Joan made a quick search of the camp. It disclosed nothing and at the end she bent over Mock-a-net for an instant.

When she straightened up it was to turn at once to her canoe and start homeward.

It was over these things, these and several others, that Joan pondered as she paddled slowly down the shore to Gus Fleenor's trading-post after she had sent her note to Wallace Searles. Mock-a-net evidently had been drunk. But there had been no odor of whisky. When Joan had bent over her just before leaving she had failed to catch the scent of alcohol. She had not found a bottle near the camp, and Stanton, in all his many searches, had failed to find one.

Joan recalled, too, that Mock-a-net's father and mother had been smoking. The pipes lay beside them as if dropped when they had gone to sleep. Mock-a-net seemed to have been intoxicated, and Mock-a-net had never smoked before.

The Indian girl had twice refilled her pipe, each time from a little blue bag. Joan had never seen tobacco like that in the North country. White men and red, everyone smoked his plug, whittling off as much as he needed and grinding it in the palms of his hands. It was as much a part of the North country as the pines themselves, this peculiar motion of the hands preliminary to filling a pipe.

Yet this tobacco was ready cut, done up in little bags of a couple of ounces or so. This was one of the things Joan had noticed soon after her arrival at the mission, one of the things that had first started her to thinking of a possible solution of Stanton's problem, and, when she started for Fleenor's, her plan of action was well-outlined.

Fleenor was sitting just inside the door of his store when she entered. He was tilted back in his chair against the wall, his face turned toward the ceiling, and he did not hear Joan's moccasins or know she was there until her form darkened the door.

"Good-day, miss," he said as he came to the floor with a thump. "You scared me, coming in like those Indians that way. It's a nice kind of a day."

"A fine day," agreed Joan. "You're not quite so close to the lake as when I was here last."

"No, miss. Ain't it funny where that water went to. Mr. Bancroft tells me there isn't a drop going over the falls now, and that the engineer can't find where the river went to."

"Oh, but he has found it!" cried Joan, glad of this opportunity to prolong the conversation. "He found it this morning. Last night, I mean. It is up in the northwest bay, behind a big, flat rock."

"You mean he has found where the water got out?" demanded Fleenor, leaning forward suddenly.

Then he straightened back.

"Well, he must be a bright one, that feller. The Indians told me it never would be found because it was in the bottom of the lake somewhere."

"No, it's right at the end of the northwest bay and Mr. Madison is going to furnish the capital and they'll put in a big plant there and we'll probably have a sort of little town of our own, up here in the wilderness. We can telephone out to the railroad and have electric lights. Won't it seem funny to see electric lights hanging in the Indians' wigwams?"

Fleenor did not answer. He only stared at the girl, and Joan felt that he was looking past her, not thinking of what she had said.

"Is this engineer up there now?" he asked suddenly.

"I think he went up this morning," Joan answered, knowing that Wallace had undoubtedly started immediately upon the receipt of her note.

Fleenor arose and went to the door. He

looked out for a moment, toward the lake and across the big clearing along the shore at the head of the bay. Suddenly he turned back to Joan.

"Was there something you wanted, miss?"

"Only a couple of pounds of tea."

Fleenor hurried around the end of his single, short counter and set the two packages down before her. Joan picked them up and turned toward the door. Then she stopped.

"Oh, yes, and Mr. Searles, the engineer, you know, asked me to get him a package of tobacco."

The trader reached for a plug of smoking-tobacco.

"No," objected Joan, "he said the kind in the little blue bags. That on the next shelf."

Fleenor glanced quickly at the girl. She was looking at the tobacco.

"He don't want that kind," he announced flatly. "That's cheap stuff I get in for the Indians. A white man couldn't smoke it. If you knew how they get that kind of tobacco, miss, you wouldn't ask for it."

"But he said the kind in the little blue bag," declared Joan. "I know he doesn't like the plug kind. He says in the States he always smoked the other."

Fleenor looked at her sharply, but Joan had turned her head toward the door and stood as if waiting for the package to be set before her. With a quick motion the trader reached under the counter and drew forth a blue bag which he set down with the query:

"Is that all?"

"I think so," was the absent reply.

Fleenor turned around the end of the counter and started toward the door. Joan, still looking absently out of the window, reached to the counter for the tobacco. The trader was in the door. He hesitated, looked at her again, and then stepped out.

Instantly Joan leaped up and sat on the counter. By bending far over she could just reach the shelf on which were many little blue packages of tobacco. She grasped one, tossed the one Fleenor had given her under the counter, and the next instant had slid back to the floor and started toward the door.

She had gone only half-way, however, when Fleenor rushed back into the room.

"I got you through the window!" he exclaimed angrily, at the same time snatching at the tobacco in Joan's hand.

Joan darted to one side, Fleenor wheeling after her. She was too quick for the short legs and too ample girth and retreated easily before him in such a way as to get a clear dash for the open door.

"What do you mean, Mr. Fleenor?" she demanded indignantly. "Get out of my way and let me go."

"No you don't!" he retorted. "I'm on to your game, and I guess you're on to mine."

Joan made a rush toward the door. Fleenor stepped forward more quickly than one would have thought possible. His right fist shot up and out and caught Joan beneath the chin and slightly to one side.

The girl sprawled headlong, her packages of tobacco and tea rolling to the door. Fleenor did not even look at her again but reached at once for the blue sack of tobacco and replaced it on the shelf. Then, more leisurely, he restored the tea to the shelves, going around the counter to do so.

When he returned he carried an empty flour sack and several small pieces of rope. With amazing deftness he tied Joan's hands and feet and gagged her securely. Then grasping her beneath the arms he dragged her roughtly across the floor to the rear of the store and into a small, dark room. When he came out he locked the door, placed the key in his pocket, glanced quickly about and then hurried out and down to the beach where Joan's canoe had been drawn up.

Awkwardly he lifted the birch to his shoulders and carried it back into the brush for quite a distance. Returning to the beach he trampled about where Joan had landed so that no sign of her arrival remained in the wet sand.

Then with a last glance out on to the bay and around the empty clearing he turned back to the store and went around to his own house at the rear.

"She'll keep there until I'm ready to fix her right," he muttered as he entered.

CHAPTER XIII

STANTON FILLS HIS PIPE

STANTON BANCROFT'S activities the morning following Joan's discovery of the lost river were also precipitate and with a new purpose. Ideas which had flitted through his head most of the night after his talk with Joan began to take more definite shape. When Joan hurried off to

send her note to Wallace, there came to him suddenly the significance of the things she had hinted at and of those he had observed himself.

He, too, had seen that Mock-a-net was smoking. He had refrained from telling Joan because he knew the friendship that existed between the two girls. He had begun, too, to see something significant in his continued failure to find bottles in the Indian camps. For a week he had wondered if something other than whisky might not be responsible for the degradation of his Indians. Several times he had been on the point of discussing this possibility with Joan, but on each occasion he had refrained because of a sudden fear of ridicule. The thing seemed too preposterous, so unbelievable.

When Joan went into the house Stanton turned and hurried across the little clearing to the log building which served as church, schoolhouse, hospital and home for stray Indians. In the schoolroom was an encyclopedia, not exactly up to the minute, but a standard work. For a half-hour Stanton read, first in one volume, then in another. At the end of that time he replaced the books and raced to the cabin.

"Where is Joan, aunty?" he called to Mrs. Knox through the door.

"She has gone over to Fleenor's for some tea," came the reply from the kitchen. "I told her not to go, but she would."

Stanton heard only that she was gone. Instantly he was on his way to the lake and paddling out of the bay and across to the opposite shore. His light birch seemed to be lifted from the water with each stroke and in less than an hour he had covered the four miles and was drawing up at a beach before an Indian camp.

Stanton had purposely selected the home of the Indians he had seen at the trading-post the day before. If they had been obtaining something other than whisky from Fleenor they would have it now. If his plan to learn what this might be was to succeed there could be no better place, for they would probably be under the influence of whatever it was that had eluded him for so long. Then, too, it was a small camp, only a single family, and there would be little chance of interruption.

Eagerly Stanton watched for signs of life about the wigwam as he approached. There was no smoke and no one moved in the small clearing. His landing aroused only the dogs.

The young missionary made his way at once to the door of the birchbark tent and looked inside. Lying beyond the fire were the Indian and his squaw. Each was unconscious. Beside each lay a stone pipe. Between their heads, and beyond the dead fire, was a small, blue package of tobacco, half empty.

Stanton bent down and smelled of the man's breath, then of the woman's. As he straightened he picked up the little blue bag and went outside.

Seated on a windfall, he shook out some of the contents into one hand and examined it closely. With a forefinger he poked about among the granules, for this was an unfamiliar form of tobacco. In his own pipe and in the pipes of the men he had always known only the compact, convenient plug had been smoked, the plug that must be whittled and ground between the palms.

At last, uncertain but suspecting, Stanton drew his pipe from a pocket and slowly filled it with the tobacco from the little, blue bag. Slowly he drew out a match and struck it. When the flame had run up the stick he held it over the bowl and puffed.

His first impression was that it was a mild, somewhat tasteless tobacco. It lacked the strength and the bite of the kind usually sold in the Northland. Because he had been so sure that he was on the verge of the solution of his problem, his disappointment was the more intense. It was only one more clue in this baffling situation that had led him nowhere. Bitterly he asked himself if his whole band of Indians must be wiped out while he stood by, impotent to stop this evil that had come upon them.

And then even in his depression he was conscious of a strange feeling of elation. For the first time in months he was happy, even resigned to failure in his work. He had done his best. There were other things in the world beside the fate of one band of Indians. Why sacrifice himself, his love and his life in this forgotten corner? It brought him nothing.

Out in the world were rewards that counted. It was not too late even then to win the love of Joan. He could give her as much as Searles could give. He would have had it to give long ago had he been at real work and not laboring in the perpetuation of an impossible dream of a visionary father.

It was the disloyalty of this thought that roused him. Shaking his shoulders as if he were throwing off an adversary, Stanton dashed the pipe to the ground and rushed to the lake. Throwing himself upon the shore, he thrust his head into the cool water.

The shock did what he had felt unable to do for himself. It cleared his thoughts and brought him back to normality. He felt somehow that he had been away to another world. He was still a little dazed by the ideas that had come to him there, he who had never considered the possibility of deserting his father's work and who had so steadfastly fought even the desire for Joan's love.

Then the importance of his discovery burst upon him. He had found the cause of the Indians' degradation. And he had found its source. At the thought of all the misery and crime brought to a happy people that the despicable keeper of a trading-post might make a few more dollars, his muscles hardened and all the indignation of the past months merged in one fierce determination to avenge them. The intensity of the emotion demanded immediate action and he started to his feet.

It was then that he saw for the first time an approaching canoe. Even at the distance he recognized the lone paddler as Mush-to-we, a squaw who lived near Fleenor's post. Forty years before she had married a white man, an employee of a fur-trading company, who had been killed soon afterward.

She had one son, Louis Debeau, who had been employed by Fleenor since he had purchased the trading-post and who alone of all the Indians in the district had never come under the influence of the mission. His mother, on the other hand, had been one of the stanch friends of the Bancrofts, and, so far as Stanton had observed, had failed to fall a victim to this new depravity that had come to her people.

Several times Stanton had gone to Mush-to-we in an endeavor to obtain from her some clue to the whisky mystery. But always she had refused to talk. She had admitted that it was bringing ruin to the members of the band, that they would soon be destitute and incapable of earning a living. But always with that stubbornness which only an Indian can display she had declined to tell anything.

MUSH-TO-WE did not run her canoe up to the shore beside Stanton as he stood watching her approach. Instead, she whirled it broadside to him and then back toward the direction from which she had come.

"Om-beh!" she commanded in Ojibway. "Be-me-to!"

Stanton, his desire for immediate vengeance uppermost, only stood and looked at her.

"Come! Hurry!" she repeated.

When he did not move she swung the bow of her canoe on to the beach and scrambled back to the stern.

"Get in!" she commanded in Ojibway. "There is no time. We can paddle faster together."

"What is it, Mush-to-we?" asked Stanton as he stepped in and shoved off. "What is the matter?"

"It has gone too far, this thing," replied the squaw. "I am ready to tell, but first we must paddle fast. The white man is in danger, may now be killed."

"Do you mean Fleenor?" demanded Stanton as he began to paddle.

"No, the white man who has lived where the falls were. It is Fleenor who plans for him to die."

"Fleenor! Kill Searles! Have you, too, been smoking Fleenor's tobacco, Mush-to-we?"

"Fleenor, he send Louis to rob the white man's tent. Fleenor told Louis to make the new river. Now Fleenor send Louis to kill the white man who came to steal the falls and carry it away on wires. You must hurry to save him, and to save Louis."

The last words told Stanton the reason for the squaw's action. The mother-love had driven the information from her mouth when the affliction of her people had failed. It was to protect Louis, to save Louis from this new crime and its consequences, that she had followed Stanton across the lake after finding that he was not at the mission.

"But the falls, Mush-to-we," persisted Stanton. "Fleenor could not do that."

"Louis knew where the river might go, if much powder was used. Fleenor sent him to do it when he knew that the white man had gone out to get more white men to help him steal the falls."

"But why should Fleenor do that? Why did he care whether Searles stole the falls?"

"He does not want white men in the

country. He has sold the Indians this strange tobacco and the strange tea that makes them drunk and gives them pleasant dreams and sleep. If white men come they will know what he is doing and stop it. He wants no white men. He thinks he can fool you because you never heard of this new tobacco, but he knew the men who would come in to steal the falls would know."

"But there wouldn't be an Indian left in another year to buy any of him," protested Stanton.

"He plans to get more. Already he has sent Louis out three times to Indians farther away. Haven't you seen strange Indians at the post this Summer? They were coming for the new tobacco."

"Such a thing couldn't be kept up. After a while there would be no fur, nothing with which to buy."

"I don't think he expects to stay long," answered Mush-to-we. "He does nothing like traders do. He makes no plans, does no work. Only he thinks of selling tobacco, and more tobacco. He gets lots of money, and after while he has enough and goes away. He doesn't care what happens to the Indians."

"How much does he charge for those little blue packages?"

"Two dollars."

"Two dollars!" cried Stanton, resting his paddle on the gunwales and turning to look at the squaw.

She had not lost a stroke since they had pulled away from the Indian camp. Stanton watched her for a moment. Those words had told him how great had become the Indians' desire for the drug. Under his nose Fleenor had laid his plans for this quick campaign and had carried it out. All the time he had been laughed at, his efforts to find whisky mocked, and all the time Fleenor's work had gone on.

Stanton resumed his paddling at once and the two shot the canoe across the big lake straight toward the mission bay. Halfway there, Stanton turned and asked another question.

"How is the white man at the falls in danger, Mush-to-we?"

"Fleenor has sent Louis to kill him, as he sent him to rob his tent and to make the new river. Whenever anything like that is to be done, he sends Louis."

"But why does Louis go? Why didn't you stop him?"

"You have seen what the new tobacco does," was the hopeless answer. "Against that tobacco no one can do anything. Louis is like a willow stem in the hands of Fleenor. He can get only what Fleenor gives him. Fleenor has only to give him three or four pipes and Louis will do anything for more."

After a few minutes Stanton turned again.

"Where has Louis gone? To the white man's camp where the river was?"

"There or the place where the new river is. That is where the white man will go."

"How did Fleenor know that?"

"I don't know. He came to the wigwam only a little while ago and talked to Louis. He gave him some pipes to smoke, and Louis told me when he took his rifle to go."

As Stanton paddled he puzzled over this last disclosure. How had Fleenor known that Searles had found the new river? When he had left the mission that morning Searles had not yet heard of Joan's discovery. And Joan had not gone to tell him. Joan had gone to Fleenor's.

Stanton whirled in his place.

"Did you stop at the mission to look for me?" he asked.

Mush-to-we nodded and said:

"Then me see you across lake."

"Was Joan there?"

"Mrs. Knox say she not come back."

Two people can not grow up together as had Joan and Stanton without gaining a most intimate knowledge of the mental processes of each other. Habits of thought and habits of action become known as well as little habits of speech and manner, and Stanton, as he paddled more swiftly than ever now, knew where Joan had gone and for what purpose.

She, too, had arrived at the conclusion that something else than whisky was responsible for the Indian problem. She, too, had traced this to Fleenor and alone, depending upon her wit, she had gone to get what evidence she could of Fleenor's guilt.

Of a sudden Fleenor had become a monster in Stanton's eyes. His campaign against Searles was indicative of infinite possibilities for evil. If a man would kill another man to eliminate interference with his systematic ruination of a whole people, he would not stop at less when confronted by a girl.

"Quick, Mush-to-we!" commanded Stanton. "Straight for the mission."

He paddled as he never had before, not in any races with Joan or against any heavy seas when she had been in the bow. As they landed at the beach in front of the mission he did not stop. The canoe struck without diminished speed, and Stanton kept right on toward the house, calling as he ran:

"Come on, Mush-to-we! Hurry!"

The Indian woman followed as Stanton rushed into the front door.

"Has Joan come back aunty?" he called as he ran to the gun-rack over the fireplace.

"No," answered Mrs. Knox as she came in from the kitchen, "and she has——"

But Stanton did not wait to hear. He had run out to meet Mush-to-we.

"Go down the trail to the river," he commanded. "Find the white man's camp there and tell him of his danger. His tent is at the end of the trail."

"But Louis will know I did it," began the squaw.

"I can't go," exclaimed Stanton, not waiting to hear the woman out. "You must save Louis alone. I will come when I can. Quick, if you want to save him."

The next instant he was dashing across the clearing and into the brush, leaving Mrs. Knox staring first after him and then after Mush-to-we.

CHAPTER XIV

HOW VIRTUE WINS

IT WOULD have been difficult, perhaps, to find two men more extremely opposite in every way then Stanton Bancroft and Gus Fleenor as they faced each other in the store.

The fur-trader, whose type had been fixed so instantly and correctly by Wallace Searles, looked stolidly at the other. Nothing about the man conformed with his surroundings. His squat, round, unhealthy form filled only ludicrously the stanch, roughly hewed chair that had been built for a woodsman. The gray, splotched skin, heavy jaws and flabby cheeks contrasted sharply with the great, age-colored logs of the wall behind him.

It needed only a little imagination, a wink of the eyes, to transform the scene to the back room of a tough saloon in a great city. One look at the man and there was the suggestion of the odor of stale beer, of quick, significant glances behind large glass mugs, of a dirty towel, the nearest to a suggestion to purity, battling eternally with the reek and residue of malt.

Fleenor would give such a picture to one familiar with his kind. He carried his background and his frame with him, emanating inevitably an atmosphere that would taint a vacuum.

Strong and lean and straight, clean in line and clear of skin and eye, his chest extended by the half-mile run to the trading post, his head up, glance straight, jaw firm, the young missionary, from his moccasins to his black, hatless, tousled head, proclaimed the great, wide, stainless and unstaining Northland.

There was nothing of the cleric, of the pedagogue, of the bigot, in his appearance because he was simply what he seemed to be, a clean, energetic, straightforward, intelligent young man who loved life and loved to live it. He radiated health and wholesomeness and honesty and, as he looked at the trader, there was that in his bearing which showed that the Northland had bred in him its courage as well as its vigor.

"Fleenor," he demanded, "where is Miss Malloch?"

"Miss Malloch?" repeated the other. "I don't know. I haven't seen her."

"You lie!" cried Stanton as he took a quick step forward. "You lie, Fleenor! Where is she?"

"I got something else to do besides keeping track of all the skirts in the country," was the sullen response.

Fleenor was watching the missionary closely. Heretofore he had thought of the young man only contemptuously. He was a preacher, soft, unused to force, easily deluded, easily bluffed. The trader had hardly considered him in his plans, but now he suddenly realized that he had made a mistake, that this was no soft-spoken disciple of the Gospel. Still, his former opinion would not down entirely, and he played his game as he had planned to play it. Bancroft might bluff, but that was as far as he would go.

And Fleenor believed he was playing a safe hand. There was no trace of Joan having come to his store. She was securely bound and gagged in the little back room and would remain there until darkness

permitted him to get her out of the way. A couple of rocks, the convenient lake, and no one could fasten anything on him.

Stanton, on the other hand, had only one bit of evidence that Joan was at the trading-post, or had been there. Fleenor knew of the discovery of the lost river. And Fleenor could have learned that only from Joan, for only Joan and Stanton himself had known it.

It was not upon this that Stanton depended, however. The conviction had come to him that Joan was in danger at the trading-post, might even then be past his aid, and that conviction had been so strong, so certain, he did not need, in his overpowering dread, any substantiating circumstance.

"Fleenor," he said, "I'm going to kill you if you don't produce Miss Malloch, and if she's hurt I'll kill you anyhow. I've known ever since I first saw you that there was something wrong. I felt it rather than saw it. I felt as though I were contaminated whenever I came near you. I tried to overcome that feeling as there seemed to be no ground for it, but now I know my intuition was right.

"You are the vilest thing I ever knew, Fleenor. You came into a peaceful, happy, clean country, where from, God only knows. But you have tracked in with you the slime and depravity and evil that we never thought possible, and we do only one thing in this country with such as you."

Stanton paused a moment as if for breath. Fleenor sneered, but the sneer died instantly when the missionary began again.

"I've got the proof of your hashish peddling at last, Fleenor," he said. "I've got the proof of who was responsible for the murder of the squaw at the mission. And now I've got you. But first you're going to tell me where Joan is. Where is she?" and he strode forward threateningly.

At once the entire situation changed for Fleenor. It was no longer a case of his tracks being covered, of his needing only to sit tight until things had worked out as he had planned. Still, there was one hopeful element. Bancroft was only bluffing. If he had nerve he would have come himself and not have sent the girl.

"Look here, bo," he retorted. "Cut out those funny names you're calling me and quit getting off those hoppy ideas. I tell you I ain't seen the skirt and she ain't been here, and as for this some kind of peddling, I don't know what you're talking about. You and I'se always been friends."

"Tell me where she is!" interrupted Stanton angrily. "No more talk. Act! And do it quick!"

He had been standing in the middle of the room and as he began to speak he advanced slowly toward the trader, his left hand holding his rifle, his right clenched. Fleenor had not changed his position from that in which he had been when the missionary entered. His chair was tilted back against the wall. His feet were resting on the lower front round. His hands were clasped behind his fat neck. It was a characteristic position, one in which Stanton had often found him on going to the store.

But as the missionary advanced the trader's pudgy body suddenly contracted. Of its own power, it seemed, the chair snapped down to the floor and Fleenor's right hand flicked out from behind his neck.

There was a bright flash and Stanton, dodging to one side and throwing up his rifle instinctively, felt the shock of something strike the butt. The rifle quivered in his hand and he saw a short, thick knife vibrating there, its point half buried through the thick wood.

Dazed by this sudden, unexpected attempt upon his life, fascinated by the quivering blade that had been aimed at his chest, Stanton did not act instantly. He had not adjusted himself to the idea that this squat, flabby man could resist.

Fleenor, trained in many such encounters, possessed of a skill and resource developed through long years of brawls and stealth and trickery and brutality, found no cause for hesitation. The same motion that had thrown the knife ended in a grasp upon the chair and was continued in a swinging, flail-like sweep of the heavy piece of furniture.

Again Stanton dodged to one side and threw up the rifle instinctively, only to have it knocked from his hands and into a corner. Fleenor did not end the swing there but whirled clear around with the mincing steps of a hammer thrower, and launched the chair straight at Stanton, following it up instantly.

The missionary caught the full force of

a blow that would have dropped a moose. One chair leg struck him in the stomach, another in the jaw. The weight of the whole carried him off his feet and he went back and down against the wall at the rear of the store.

Partly stunned, the breath knocked out of him, Stanton was unable to move when he saw the trader, now transformed into a demon of action and energy, recover the chair and swing it above his head, bringing it down over his opponent with a force that would brain him. Stanton tried to dodge, threw up one elbow. There was a splintering crash, a sharp pain in his shoulder. He believed it had meant the end, but through the wreckage of the great chair he saw Fleenor leaping onto his stomach with both feet.

Stanton did not realize that his life had been saved only because the chair was higher than those Fleenor had once been accustomed to swing and that it had crashed against the wall above his head, one splinter driving into his shoulder. He did realize, however, in the three or four seconds which had elapsed since the knife had been flipped at his heart, that here was a method of warfare of which he had not even heard.

Never in his life had he had a serious physical encounter with any one. Then, in the Northland it was a case of stand up and fight openly. The unwritten rules were primitive. They permitted many things never seen in the prize-ring. But at least there was an underlying spirit of honesty and a rigid adherence to nature's own weapons.

But if Stanton thought of these things it was through a red curtain. The treachery of Fleenor's first attack, the very evident intention to stamp and crush and cut the life out of him, transformed the young missionary into a scarlet-visioned animal. While Fleenor was in the middle of his leap Stanton rolled quickly away from the wall and rose to his hands and knees through the wreckage of the chair. He felt the trader's heels glance off his ribs as he came down and at once sprang up and to his feet.

When Fleenor struck the floor and knew he had missed, he thrust against the wall with both hands and, as he bounced back, whirled in mid-air and faced Stanton. Instantly his right fist shot up and out, much as it had when Joan had darted past him toward the door. He had never known it to fail in close quarters, that blow, and it caught Stanton fairly on the side of the jaw.

But Fleenor, too, was to be treated to a new kind of fight, or fighter. Back of his adversary were generations of clean living, of physical fitness for its own sake, of sleep in the dark hours and exertion in the open sunlight. There were no weakening effects of disease or drink or drugs, of foul air and transformed days, of fear or of guilt.

Stanton's head rocked back, but he did not falter. His two arms reached out for the trader. A left hook to his stomach jarred him, made him gasp, but there was no weakening in his forward movement. Striking right and left, each blow timed and distanced to a hair, Fleenor fell back more from his wonder that the missionary did not go down than from any dread of the long arms that reached and reached for him.

And then Stanton rushed. By sheer weight and the strength of his arms, he smothered the blows that did not fail in their regular tattoo. He did not even lower his head as he came straight on. He seemed only to walk into the pistoned fists, past them and to his mark.

With a quick dip of his shoulders he grasped Fleenor about the waist and lifted him from the floor. Stanton's body twisted and the trader's feet were whirled out, his head down. As high as his shoulders the missionary lifted him, and then with all his maddened strength hurled him to the floor.

It was sufficient. In one instant, in one act, the accumulated vigor and vitality and nerve force of a century had been fused to sublimation. Fleenor, triumphant veteran of a thousand broils, lay crushed and broken before a physical fitness and courage of which he had never dreamed.

CHAPTER XV

THE SECOND BATTLE

STANTON knew only vaguely that he had conquered. He was still blinded and dazzled by the incandescent glare of the passion which had seized him.

The cause of that passion continued to inflame him. Not once had the jarring fists of the trader dislodged the thought of Joan. He had meant to kill. As he stood there

looking down at the shapeless, inert mass at his feet he hoped that he had killed. If the physical fitness of a century of right living had culminated in an irresistible force, the moral training of many centuries and the right thinking of a lifetime had been obliterated by the persistency of the primitive.

Perhaps, as he had acted instinctively, it was instinct that led Stanton across the body of his opponent toward the rear of the store. The door to the small room was fastened with a hasp and padlock. The young missionary shook it and called:

"Joan! Joan! Are you there?"

No answer came. Stanton's frenzy returned and he threw himself against the door. It would not give. He ran back, grasped a leg of the dismembered chair and thrust it behind the hasp. One pull and the clinched staple straightened and came out.

The room into which Stanton rushed was windowless and little light reached it from the front of the store. In the darkness he paused a moment and called Joan's name. In answer came a dull, soft thump on the floor.

"Joan!" cried Stanton, groping toward the sound. "Joan! Where are you?"

There was only a faint thump and Stanton, now on his hands and knees, crawled toward it. His hands touched her body where it lay in the darkest corner.

"Joan," he begged. "Why don't you answer?"

She squirmed slightly beneath his touch and he at once ran his hands up to her face, where they felt the gag Fleenor had so skilfully bound.

Stanton rose to his feet and picked Joan up. He carried her out into the light in the store and laid her down.

"And he left you in there like that!" he exclaimed when her eyes met his and he was reaching for his knife. "I hope I killed him."

He cut the rope which held the gag in place and drew it from her mouth. He cut the rope about her ankles and then turned her over and cut those which held her wrists behind her back.

As Joan lay on her side she saw Fleenor near her. Her jaws were cramped and stiff, and it was a wry, crooked little smile she gave Stanton. Her lips moved painfully, and at last she spoke.

"I heard you," she said. "But Stanton"—and a look of sympathy swept across her face—"you're hurt! Your face is a mass of blood, and there's a piece of wood sticking into your shoulder."

"I'm not hurt," he protested, and he meant it, for no pain had yet penetrated the red veil which had cut off so completely the every-day world. "But Joan! How long have you been there, and did he hurt you?"

He glared at the helpless body on the floor until Joan laughed.

"I'm just stiff and sore, is all," she said as she struggled to her hands and knees. "Help me up, Stan. My, what a looking place this is!"

"But are you all right?" he insisted as he helped her to a bench beside the wall.

"I will be when I've had a drink of water," she answered as she began to rub her ankles. "My mouth and throat are dry as a bone from that cloth."

As Stanton turned to the water-pail which usually set behind the door, Mrs. Knox burst in, out of breath, her eyes lighted with anger rather than apprehension.

"The wolf!" were her first words when she saw Fleenor lying on the floor. "Now you'll know I was right! The wolf!" and she walked over and glared down at the defenseless and unconscious trader.

"Is he dead?" she asked.

"I don't know," answered Stanton with an entire lack of concern. "I haven't looked to find out."

"He's harmless at least," said Mrs. Knox as she turned back to the others. "But what happened to you, Stanton? You're a sight, boy. Let me get that blood off your face."

"Never mind me!" retorted the young man irritably. "Did Mush-to-we come back?"

"Goodness no! I started after you and didn't wait to see. Where was she going in such a hurry?"

Stanton did not answer. The wave of triumph which had come with the conquest of Fleenor had not receded. He had fought for Joan and he had saved her. It was a fair fight and he had risked everything, had passed close to death. By rights she was his, as she always should have been, as she would be now. It was unthinkable that he should do this merely for another, and when he answered Mrs. Knox, it was listlessly, wearily.

"She went to warn Searles that Fleenor had sent Louis out to kill him," he said.

"But Searles isn't at his camp!" exclaimed Mrs. Knox. "He came up and asked for Joan soon after you left and then he went to the lake with that guide of his and paddled off toward the north."

"Where Louis will go next," commented Stanton absently.

"And where I sent him this morning in my note!" cried Joan.

At the words, the first she had been able to utter since she had heard of Searles's danger, Stanton turned to look at her. One glance at the girl's face cleared his brain, robbed him of the primitive, triumphant ecstasy of his victory and brought him to the normal, to the relationships that had been. In his imagination he could already see the breed, his rifle ready, sneaking up behind Wallace Searles. And he knew the result would not only be the treacherous death of an unsuspecting man but the end of happiness for the girl he loved. Tremendous as it was, the effort must be made.

"Come," he said simply to Joan. "We must save him."

Joan, on her feet instantly, started toward the door. But Mrs. Knox held her back.

"Wait," she said. "Neither of you is in any condition to go anywhere. Think what you are doing. Look at Stanton, all bruised, and that splinter sticking in his shoulder. And you, girl, you're white as a sheet."

Stanton looked around at the piece of chair leg that stuck straight up beside his ear. With a sudden motion he jerked it out, and the quick flow of blood widened the red stain on his shirt.

"We're all right, aunty," he declared confidently. "I look a lot worse than I feel and Joan is only stiff and sore from being tied up so long. You watch Fleenor. If he shows signs of coming to, tie him up until I get back. Don't let him get his hands on a thing. Remember, he's the wolf you've always called him."

"But it's pure madness," persisted Mrs. Knox. "Joan may be able to paddle but Stanton is not. And have you thought, Stanton, what would happen to Joan if you gave out? Louis sober is treacherous and Louis drunk is dangerous. Searles is a man and must take care of himself."

But Joan, carrying the rifle, had already gone through the door and was walking swiftly down to the beach. Stanton watched her for a moment and then started to follow.

"Stan," whispered Mrs. Knox tenderly. "Is it worth it? I know, boy. I have always known. My heart has ached but I could do nothing. Let Searles take care of himself. You are in no condition to battle for him. You have no right to risk yourself this way. The Northland needs you. Joan needs you. She's young. This man from the outside has just been a glittering dream. She belongs to you, always has belonged to you. And perhaps things have come out this way so that she may find out her mistake before it is too late."

She laid her hand on his arm and looked up into his face as she spoke. And as she felt his body tremble and saw the determined lines fade from around his blood-stained swollen mouth, her grip tightened.

"Don't go, boy," she pleaded. "You're hurt. Joan will be happy here with you. I know."

"Aunty!" cried Stanton, suddenly breaking away and starting toward the door. "Don't talk that way. It isn't right. Happiness can't be gained that way. I've got to go. If it is the last thing I ever do I've got to do what I can to save him."

He ran out of the door and after Joan, who had slid a canoe into the water and stood waiting for him.

CHAPTER XVI

THE RACE

"BUT why should Louis kill Wallace?" asked Joan as she and Stanton shoved out from shore and began to paddle from the bay into the main lake.

"Haven't had time to tell you before," began Stanton. "But this whisky business is at the bottom of it all. I guess you saw it before I did Joan, but after you left this morning I got to thinking about what you had said. And I've found out what it is. It's hashish, an Oriental drug. It can be smoked in tobacco or infused in water or chewed. It intoxicates, causes hallucinations and transports the user into ecstasy or lulls him to sleep. The Indians have been using it and Fleenor has been selling it to them in those little blue bags."

"But what had Wallace to do with that?" interrupted Joan.

"Fleenor sent Louis to blow out a hole

in the shore of that blind bay to kill the falls because he didn't want to have Searles or his water-power site in the country. He thought that the coming of such a thing or such men would end his business, for he knew that they would find out what he was doing. He had planned a big trade all through the country and he needed privacy. He thought I was fool enough to be misled and he was right.

"Then when he learned that Searles had found where the water had gone and that the power-plant was coming anyhow, he knew that only by killing Searles could he end the scheme. And he sent Louis out to do that."

"But Louis is not bad enough to kill in cold blood," objected Joan. "He would lie or steal but he wouldn't kill."

"He will when he's filled up with that stuff and sent out by the only man from whom he can get any more. And I imagine that Fleenor has frightened him by telling him that Searles has discovered who blew out that rock."

"Is there nothing that man would not hesitate to do?" exclaimed the girl. "A band of happy people ruined, a power-site that was to bring happiness and comfort to whole cities destroyed, a weak man made into a murderer and a strong, good man shot down in his prime. It's horrible! Is there nothing he would not do?"

"Nothing, Joan. And the most horrible part of it all is what he would have done to you."

Joan was silent. Her own words had pictured with terrifying vividness the fate that might even then be coming to the man who had promised to come to her when his work was finished, the man for whom she had been waiting. And that danger had been brought to him because her own perversity had sent him out at a time best suited to the breed's work. Her own thoughtless attempt at conversation with Fleenor had given the trader the information which had resulted in his determination to put Searles out of the way.

Then the thought that they might yet reach him in time, added power to her arms. Stanton unconsciously quickened his efforts and the two swung into that stroke which had carried them over so many hundreds of miles in the past. They skirted the point at the mouth of the bay and headed straight out into the lake toward the northwest bay three miles ahead of them.

The spruce-clad, rocky shore slipped behind. They passed the mouth of the mission bay with only a glance.

"There's Mush-to-we!" cried Joan. "Turn in."

She reached out and drew the bow of the canoe around and in three minutes they were alongside the Indian woman's canoe, which had come out to meet them.

"Louis no there," said Mush-to-we. "He go across portage other side of falls little while ago. Maybe you see him out on lake now."

She shoved her canoe past them and paddled beyond the point which lay between the mission bay and the falls.

"There he go," she said as the others joined her. "He go to the new river to find the white man there. Hurry."

She looked at Stanton with the dumb hope of a dog that has faith in its master.

"I'll try to save him Mush-to-we," answered the missionary as he thrust his canoe forward. "I'll try."

"Him better be killed than to kill," came from the Indian woman as they drew away. "It is best if he be killed."

"What do we work for?" asked Stanton after a moment. "Mush-to-we is the best product of my father's work in this country and yet she has to see the only person for whom she really cares become the only one my father could not reach. And now, despite the life she has led, she would rather see him slain than a slayer, would rather be alone in the world than the mother of a murderer.

"And the worst of it is, a white man is responsible for all the evil and unhappiness that has come to her. I don't wonder that the Indians fail to grasp the spirit of the Gospel, and in a time like this I don't blame them."

Joan did not answer. Her cramped legs and arms were now pliable and free from pain and she bent every energy to shooting the canoe forward. Her stroke was quick, strong, steady, perfectly timed. Her recovery was like the flash of a bird's wing, and her shoulders and body fell forward and backward rhythmically, every muscle adding its quota to the pressure on the paddle.

Stanton flashed his blade to the time she set and their craft was lifted forward and

up until the bottom beneath Joan was clear of the water and it seemed fairly to fly.

It was not new to them, this perfect harmony of movement, this rushing, swishing, exhilarating flight over the surface of a Northern lake. But the joy of it held them for a moment, as it always had, and for a few strokes their very mission was forgotten.

Stanton was the first to return to the reality. There came to him, with a sharp stinging thrust far more penetrating than the sliver in his shoulder, the thought that never again would he and Joan paddle together, that never again would he feel that thrill of perfect harmony, of complete coordination of thought and action, of mood and spirit.

It dulled his energy, weakened the nerve force which had been driving him on, this sudden feeling of loneliness, and the speed of the canoe slackened perceptibly. For the first time he felt the pain in his shoulder, the ache in his face and head, the weakness which loss of blood had caused.

He struggled against the debilitating effect of his mood. He looked ahead to where Louis, a mile and a half in the lead, was paddling to his work. He tried to picture the brutal nature of the breed's task, the horror of it, and the injustice, but the added speed did not come.

And then Joan glanced back for an instant. It was not in apprehension, hopelessly, fearfully. There flashed across her face that old, comradely smile, that old, taunting, irrepressible sparkle, that adorable gleam of complete understanding and accord.

It was like an intoxicating draught to Stanton and he bent to his work with a renewed determination that crushed the rising pain and feeling of weakness. Head down, guiding the power from every fiber straight to the paddle, he did not see the quick change that came to Joan. The comradely smile was still on her lips, but into her eyes had come an expression of amazement and awe. Her stroke faltered for an instant and Stanton, nerves alert for any lessening of the speed, glanced up sharply.

But Joan was again facing the bow, again in her old stride, and they sped on straight toward the distant bay, straight in the trail of the breed's canoe. Only after a few minutes the girl flashed another look over her shoulder.

"I guess we were born to this, Stan," she said softly. "You and I."

MINUTE after minute passed. In both bow and stern the strain was felt. Even the fact that they were gaining rapidly upon the single and more leisurely paddler brought little hope in the face of his big lead. Then, at any moment he might turn and see them, might suspect their purpose and hurry on to finish his work and get away.

But they neared the mouth of the bay without their presence being known to Louis Debeau. That drug-crazed breed turned the point and was lost to view and for the first time Stanton and Joan lessened their speed.

"We can catch him," whispered the girl as she turned in triumph,

But her smile vanished instantly.

"Stanton!" she cried. "What is it? Don't!"

The man in the stern, his face showing white where the blood had not dried on his cheeks, toppled over suddenly and lay still in the bottom of the canoe.

"Stanton!" repeated Joan.

She looked at him a moment and then arose and turned in the canoe so that she faced the stern. She scrambled forward until she could reach the rifle which leaned against a thwart near Stanton and set it in front of her own place.

Then, kneeling in the bow, she picked up her paddle and turned the canoe toward the bay, paddling with all her strength.

Not once did the girl look at the still form in what was now the bow of her craft. Her eyes were fixed on the point ahead and as she reached it she trailed her paddle and crept quietly around.

Half-way down the bay, paddling toward the high rock toward which flowed the new river, was the breed. He did not turn and Joan began to propel the canoe close to the shore. If the man did look around he would be less liable to see her against the darker background of rock and brush. He was still too far away for her to use the rifle or even for her to attempt to stop him by calling. If he saw that he were pursued he might rush on and complete his work before she could reach him.

Her only chance, she knew, was to catch him at the falls, at the place where Wallace would be. And that chance, she realized,

was a risky one. If Wallace were coming up the river, even now behind the high rock, she could do nothing.

Debating as to whether to rush on openly or continue to creep along the shore and gain gradually, she forced her canoe on down the bay. Louis was now almost at the rock and she was no more than two hundred yards behind. When he turned he might see her, but she took that chance, knowing that the current would aid her by occupying the man's attention as he swept around into the new channel.

Breathlessly Joan watched and paddled. Louis was at the rock. The current gripped his canoe. He moved faster, flashed on close to the high cliff and was gone.

Instantly Joan shoved her canoe out from the shore and straight at the opening which had swallowed the other. Her slower pace had given her an opportunity to recover her strength and breath and now she drove her craft out to where the current would first grasp it and aid her.

The speed of the water increased and she, too, was whirled around into the narrow gorge behind the cliff. Less than fifty yards ahead, watching the shores closely, paddled the breed. Joan was about to call, to drop her paddle for the rifle, when she saw a movement on the ridge at the end of the gorge.

Louis, too, had seen it and was creeping along the western shore, his rifle before him against a thwart. Joan watched the hillside and caught the flash of a white shirt.

It was Wallace she knew, and instinctively she paddled faster. Louis was near the shore, but she was in the center, in full force of the current, and the distance between them diminished rapidly.

There was no other movement on the hillside. Joan, watching for it, forgot Louis, forgot her own canoe, only driving it on unconsciously.

And then—dashing down the steep bank and bursting through the brush directly in front of her and at the bend of the river,—Wallace Searles rushed into the open, halting at the very brink of the stream.

At the same instant Louis dropped his paddle to the bottom of the canoe and picked up his rifle. The man he had been sent to kill, the man who, he had been made to believe, had discovered his destruction of the old river and would send him to prison for life, was before him, not more than forty yards away. His drug-inflamed mind knew only one purpose, and instantly his rifle went to his shoulder.

The sudden appearance of Wallace on the river-bank, the sudden action of the breed, had left Joan without a plan. She called out sharply, at the same time reaching for the rifle before her. It snapped to her shoulder more quickly than had the breed's, and her aim was more instantaneous because her skill was greater. No sooner was the weapon level than it leaped again from the recoil.

A cry came from Louis and his own rifle dropped into the canoe. With his left hand he grasped his right elbow and rocked back and forth in pain. The bullet had struck where Joan had intended it should strike. The man was disabled.

But instantly she saw that she might as well have aimed at a vital spot. She dropped her own rifle and picked up the paddle, but before the first stroke had been taken she knew that she could do nothing.

Louis realized his danger at the same instant. With his left arm he tried to paddle to shore. He held the blade awkwardly, pulled with it ineffectually, but the current had gripped him at the edge of the falls and there was no hope. While Joan and Wallace watched, his canoe shot out over the edge and disappeared.

CHAPTER XVII

"NORTH IS NORTH"

JOAN'S canoe had been so close to Louis's when she had fired that it, too, was caught in the last rush of the current. As the breed's craft dipped over the edge into the crushing torrent below she saw her own danger and at once exchanged rifle for paddle. A few strokes and she drew up to the bank in front of Wallace.

"I never meant to do that," she said as she looked at the engineer. "I never thought about the current and the falls."

Wallace was staring at her with something of amazement, something akin to horror, in his eyes.

"You shouldn't have shot!" he exclaimed. "Why, Joan, it's horrible for you to have such a thing on your conscience. I would rather have taken my chances than have you do such a thing."

"What!" she demanded in wide-eyed

incredulity. "Let him shoot you down in cold blood that way! Let a breed kill you, Wallace! Why——."

She stopped and stared at him. The young man was conscious that she was looking through and past him rather than studying his face. In her eyes was an expression akin to that which Stanton had missed in the canoe, which would have baffled the missionary as it now baffled the engineer.

For, while Wallace could not definitely indicate a single change in Joan, he recognized instantly that this was not the same girl he had last seen running merrily up to the mission the night before. He recognized somehow that this was no longer a girl but a woman, that in less than twenty-four hours she had been transformed. But vague as was this change, there was something less vague in the message it carried. For an instant the mere suggestion of it left him dizzy. Then Joan stepped ashore.

"Help me with Stan," she commanded.

"What on earth happened to him?" cried Wallace as he bent over the canoe. "Why, Joan, he is all battered up and covered with blood."

"He's all right," she answered almost carelessly. "He'll come to in a little while. It's just over-exertion and loss of blood. Help me get him into the shade on shore and I'll bathe his face and wrap up that cut in his shoulder."

Stanton was heavy and nothing is harder to move than the body of an unconscious man. Joan, however, was practical if not the most considerate. Wallace had tried to lift him from the canoe but could not do so.

"Take his arm on that side," said the girl, "and I'll take this one. Now we can drag him out."

In a few seconds the missionary was lying on the moss in the shade of the birch saplings on the bank.

"Now fill your hat with water and bring it to me," Joan commanded as she began to unbutton Stanton's shirt and examine the wound in his shoulder. It had ceased to bleed and she saw that it would not even require bandaging until they had returned to the mission.

"You found your river," she said as Wallace returned with the water.

"You found it," he answered. "Or, you told me where it was. How did you know it was here? I passed this place twice and never suspected it."

"I was passing yesterday afternoon and happened to remember this little neck of the bay and came in to see if it wasn't the place."

"Yesterday afternoon," repeated Wallace. Why, Joan——"

"And isn't it lucky that it did happen," interrupted the girl quickly. "Now you can go ahead and install your power-plant without being bothered by the falls and, when everything is ready, tumble these hills down across the falls here and have the others back again, as good as new."

"It has some fortunate features," he admitted absently. "But you haven't told me how Mr. Bancroft happened to be battered up so. He looks as if a horse had kicked him in the face."

"Yes, but I think he is happy just the same. You see, he got to the bottom of the whisky business this morning, only there wasn't any whisky at the bottom after all."

"You mean an Indian did that to him?"

"No, Gus Fleenor. Fleenor has been mixing hashish in tobacco and selling it to the Indians. It has been the drug, not alcohol, that has been causing all the trouble. I went over to the post this morning to buy some tea and stole a package of the tobacco to try it. Fleenor saw me and tied and gagged me and hid me in the back room of his store. Stan thought there was something the matter when I didn't come back and went over. He and Fleenor had it out. I think he killed Fleenor. He hadn't moved when we left."

"Then you discovered this plot and hurried to save me," interrupted Wallace. "And Bancroft let you come, let you run such dangers. And you've been in the power of that Fleenor. It's horrible, Joan. You can't realize the kind of man he was. He's different than any of the men you find up here."

"No," she answered, and there was a significance in her tone that Wallace did not get, "he was not of the North country."

"He was of the scum of the cities!" Wallace exclaimed. "I placed him the first time I saw him. He is the kind that runs the saloons patronized by thieves and thugs. It was there that he learned what a profitable business the selling of drugs can be, especially to uncivilized people. He was probably hard pressed by the police and got the idea he could make a fortune selling to the

Indians. But how did you find out about the half-breed coming to kill me?"

"Haven't you known that there was opposition to your work?" countered Joan.

"Yes," he admitted slowly.

"When did you first notice it?"

"That night I first saw you at the falls."

Joan was busy for a moment drying Stanton's puffed and lacerated face.

"And that was all you saw?" she finally asked.

"No, something much worse happened. The water didn't just happen to break through here. The high place in the gorge was blown out with dynamite."

"That needn't worry you," she answered calmly. "The man who did it went over the falls he himself made and won't bother you any more. And as for Fleenor. Well, Fleenor won't send any one else to do it."

"Fleenor!" cried Wallace. "Fleenor did this! Against me!"

"Fleenor wanted this country to himself so that he wouldn't be discovered in his drug-selling. He didn't want you or the men you would bring to install a plant, and he was even ready to put you out of the way to prevent your doing it."

"You're sure of this, Joan?" demanded Wallace excitedly.

"Of course. Louis's mother told Stan all about it this morning."

"And that's all the opposition there is to my work?"

"What other could there be?"

"I didn't know but that some one else wanted the falls, was bucking me. Frank found that dynamite had been used here and we have spent the forenoon trying to get a trace of who it was. Now it is all clear and the power-plant is assured. My real work is done, Joan. It's as good as finished. You remember"—and he took an eager step toward her—"what I said that night? That I had something I wanted to tell you when it was done? I can now. Joan, I want to take you away from this place, away from a country where you are exposed to such danger. It's too rough, too brutal, for you. Joan, I——"

"WALLACE!" she commanded sharply, springing back as he reached his hands toward her. "Wait a minute. I want to ask you one question. Wasn't there a girl, Wallace, a girl down in the States before you came up here?"

He looked at her in amazement. How could she know? It was impossible that she could have heard.

"Yes," he answered simply, "there was, but I never knew then, Joan, what love meant."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" cried the girl. "I'm so glad there is one, Wallace," and her face was alight with happiness. "I just thought there might be, and I'm so glad because you must go back to her. You must go back, Wallace, and forget you ever saw me. I'll be only a memory in a short time, not a bright enough memory to spoil your happiness down there."

"Joan!" protested the engineer in consternation. "Don't you see I can't——?"

"Wallace," she interrupted, and her tone and face were more serious than he had ever known them to be, "don't you see that I can't, that I've just wakened from a dream, too? It's impossible, Wallace. It never could be, only I didn't see it that way at first."

"I don't understand you, Joan."

"Fleenor couldn't, and I couldn't."

"Fleenor! What has Fleenor to do with us?"

"Listen, Wallace, and I'll try to explain. Fleenor wasn't of the North country. He didn't understand it and he never could. And the North got him.

"I'm of the North. I'm a Northwoman. My father was a Northman, and his father, and my mother was born and died in the North country. For three years I have been in college, seeing the Southland and thinking I was liking it. But it never could be, Wallace. I can never go there again, never live there. This is my home."

"But I would——"

"No, no," and she shook her head gently. "You couldn't stay here, too, Wallace, and you have missed the point. You are of the Southland, thoroughly of it. Its ways are your ways, and they never could be mine."

"That's ridiculous, Joan!" protested the engineer.

"No. Listen! You wanted me. You wanted to succeed so that you could have me. You wanted to take me out and put me in a house and give me everything you could think I might want. I know how you felt, how you planned. But you couldn't see that it isn't my way, that I never could

be happy. You had a chance, Wallace, but you never saw it.

"First, you suspected trouble, opposition, but you never told me. You brought Mr. Madison and he gave you three days in which to find the lost river. But you never told me. You never thought I counted in such things. You thought of me only as the woman in the house at home, as the one who would profit after you had run the danger, taken the risks, done the work.

"We don't do things that way in the North country. A man doesn't get a wife up here, or a woman a husband. They get mates, companions in work as well as in play, in planning and in doing. They get mates who can sorrow with them as well as laugh with them, who can suffer with them and be glad to suffer.

"I could have helped you. I would have been glad to. I wanted to, but you never gave me the chance, never even thought that I might be of help."

"But, Joan——"

"No! No! It can't be otherwise. You are going to say that we could be that way, but we couldn't. You couldn't. It isn't your way, and you'd never really understand. I saw it in your eyes that day at the mission when aunty and I knocked the Indian out. I saw it just a little while ago, after I had shot Louis in the arm and he went over the falls. You blamed Stanton just now because he allowed me to do what I could in saving the man he thought I loved.

"You think I haven't any right to do such things, that maybe it isn't womanly, or something. But that's only a part of what I have been trying to tell you. In the Southland women may be content to sit at home, although I don't believe all of them are. Up here we don't. We share things, everything, up here, Wallace."

She turned unconsciously and looked down at Stanton as she finished. Wallace was about to speak but a look had come into her eyes that silenced him. She reached down and bathed Stanton's face with a wet handkerchief and when she turned back to the engineer there lingered in her face an expression of ineffable tenderness that extinguished instantly any hope her words may have left.

"I'd be sorry," she added gently, "if I thought this was going to bring you unhappiness—but I know it won't. You are a Southman and I am a Northwoman and neither of us could be happy in the ways of the other's country. I have realized that something was wrong for a long time. Only I didn't understand what it was—today I found out. And, oh, Wallace, aren't you glad we found out in time, while happiness is within the reach of us both?"

She stooped again over Stanton and Wallace turned and walked down the shore. At the falls he met Frank, returning from down the river.

"He never come up, that fellow who try to shoot you," he said. "He die quick in there," and he waved his hand toward the tumbling, crashing water. Then he looked up-stream and saw Joan bending over the missionary.

"That girl, she can shoot," he exclaimed admiringly. "That's the way in the North country. The women just as good as the men."

Wallace returned to where Joan was caring for Stanton.

"Can't I take him back to the mission in my canoe?" he asked. "Frank and I can lift him."

"You are going right back?" she asked.

"Yes, I thought I might catch Mr. Madison before he reaches the railroad."

Joan stood up and extended her hand.

"Good-by, Wallace," she said. "You go now, and good luck. I'm so glad there's a girl down there."

"But Bancroft," he protested. "You need help with him."

"No," and Joan turned and looked at the unconscious man on the moss, "he will be all right with me."

It wasn't that Wallace believed she was always right, always competent to meet any situation, that he turned away so readily. Again he had caught the look in her eyes as she glanced at the other man and he knew it was useless to stay.

"Good-by, Joan," he said simply as he stepped into his canoe.

He and Frank shoved out into the stream and began to paddle. At the bend Wallace looked back.

Joan did not even see him. She was sitting on the moss, Stanton's head in her lap, looking down into the bruised and battered face. The next moment Frank had paddled around the turn in the river.

Dan of the Sword

by

Charles M. Cosby

Author of "The Taming of Larson."

GOVERNING the Lake Lanao district in Mindanao not long ago was an infantry colonel so cautious in all his ways that the men of his command referred to him contemptuously as "Coldfoot." Since then he has jumped a dozen colonels, "Yankee Dan" Brown among the rest. Which goes to show that the enlisted man's opinion means far less than a young and charming wife with powerful connections—if personal advancement is all that counts.

Colonel Coldfoot did count a few other things worth while, but they were things that had to do with the saving of his own skin and it was chiefly because of them that the soldiers read his pedigree in terms of coarsest fable and fervently hoped for the time when he would wallow in a warmer place than Mindanao. The basis of their complaints was this—that he held daily powwows with the Moro chieftains of the district and vied with them in extravagant expressions of friendship and esteem, though the soldiers knew, and knew he knew, that these same *dattos* were winking at murder and the theft of arms.

Both his knowledge and his fears were revealed too plainly. At night the camp-guard was always doubled by his order, daily powwows notwithstanding. Some said he surrounded his tent with skirmish figures, life-size, as a farmer places scarecrows in his field.

Even the Moro interpreters snickered behind his back, and the soldiers cursed him to a man. From their point of view his conduct savored of hypocrisy and cowardice —the deadly double sin which enlisted men will not forgive. His behavior they regarded as a disgrace to the regiment and sulked or fretted, according to their natures, while the Moros grew bolder and more arrogant.

It is doubtful whether Coldfoot at this time realized the detestation in which he was held both by the officers of his command and the enlisted men. It is equally doubtful, however, whether full realization would have prompted him to change. His wife, only daughter of a senior senator and a glorious young creature who loved power for the sheer glory of it, was even then exerting every charming wile and every shred of influence in a joyous fight to wrest it from the hands of reluctant Fate, and Coldfoot played a doubly careful game lest some act of his upset her plans.

Unlike his wife, Colonel Coldfoot was cold, vain, selfish. He depended on rank, the mere prestige of place, rather than performance, to win him the subservient respect his small heart craved. There was nothing of the spectacular in his ambition.

He preferred to crawl safely into power, rather than storm the heights of glory, hit or miss. Accordingly it behooved him in playing safe, not only to safeguard his own skin in a country where death lurks in the whispering jungle naked kris in hand, but to avoid complications at Washington, where the powers about this time were frowning on anything that smacked of bloodshed—particularly Moro blood.

"Win them by kindness," was the gist of an order that had gone forth. If a Moro slipped into camp at night and killed a sentry or a sleeping soldier it was lamentable of course, but after all merely an incident in the "horrid" game. Better to lose a few enlisted men than raise the clamor of the pacifists against "a brutal army."

It was an order that exactly fitted Colonel Coldfoot's hand. Relieving him of much responsibility, it enabled him to sit tight in his doubly guarded camp, while his men drowsed on their dangerous posts under the strain of extra duty and his wife pulled the wires that would move him up. If the isolated sentry suffered, that was the sentry's lookout.

Now the soldiers knew that the hands of their officers were tied in the red tape of a thin-skinned department and could have forgiven inactivity in the face of murder, but in their eyes it was no excuse for those life-size skirmish figures crying of cold feet, nor the belittling of a colonel's proper dignity in kowtowing to these murderous heathen brown men. In the class privacy of guard-room and mess-tent they expressed their innermost convictions with fluency and fervor.

As yet, however, they had handed Coldfoot over to nothing more shameful than a natural death, but there came a time when all prayed that a Moro might chase this "cold-footed gu-gu-loving" colonel across the parade-ground in broad daylight and straight into the popular American equivalent for hades.

This followed the cutting up of Private Jack Benton on post No. 5. True, other men had been slain, and that quite frequently, but never before had the murderer left a clue behind. It was found by a detachment of the guard, a gaudy sash clutched in the dead man's hand, and was identified as the property of a follower of Datto Laem Tao. Colonel Coldfoot was so apprised.

There followed a courteous exchange of messages and another two-hour powwow, at the end of which Coldfoot made final apology to his dear friend, the Datto. It was absurd, he said. Sashes are so much alike.

Soon after this incident Coldfoot was recalled to a more congenial job in Zamboango, where Mrs. Coldfoot awaited him triumphantly.

The colonel who came to relieve Coldfoot was a different kind of man. He had no wife, and scarcely any acquaintances at Washington. His pull was less than nothing. But he knew his business, which was a refreshing fact to the wiser ones at headquarters, who know that connections and red tape do not make an army. "Yankee Dan" was the distinguishing appellation most frequently used behind his back, but it was "Colonel Brown" to the shrewd, truculent old face of him.

As man and soldier, Colonel Daniel W. Brown was thoroughly respected, and a little feared by some of his superiors whom he had embarrassed on more than one occasion with his too fine knowledge of military matters and his bull-headed way of living up to it. This alone was enough to make his pull a minus quantity.

Colonel Brown took hold of a difficult situation with the vigor of a strong man who knows what he wants and goes after it. From the first his blunt aggressiveness went a long way toward endearing him to his men. It revealed itself on the morning Coldfoot turned over the command and undertook to do the same same thing with the daily powwow. Yankee Dan looked the Moros over without enthusiasm.

"What's this?" he demanded. "A royal function?"

"It is their way of showing good will and friendship," Coldfoot replied, "and I have found it good policy to humor them. They can give you a lot of trouble if so minded."

"They seem to have given you plenty," grunted Brown, who was anything but a diplomat. "As for friendship, let 'em prove it by staying home nights and keeping their crooked knives out o' Christian people. Let 'em demonstrate. A few months will show how friendly they are. Let 'em prove it."

"But, my dear Colonel," Coldfoot exclaimed in horrified amazement, "these are men of rank. They are entitled to some consideration."

"And they'll get all the consideration they deserve," Brown retorted, gruffly. "But rank won't get it for 'em. Results—that's what I want. I'll give 'em justice, and plenty of it, without encouraging their bloody superstitions."

For a moment Coldfoot forgot both his eagerness to please this gruff old man and his desire to justify himself. Brown, in disparaging rank, had put a flaw in the very groundwork of his happiness. It had suddenly occurred to him that rank and real power are not always synonymous and the initial pang of this embryo disappointment filled him with a cold but vicious hatred.

"You," he said, coldly, in his best official manner, "have harped on the killing of a few enlisted men. They were slain by outlaws. These Dattos here had no hand in it."

"Perhaps not," said Brown. "No hand, but a very large part, or I miss my guess. I've no confidence in men who are always grinning at you with their lips and cursing you with their eyes. Look at that big, swart hombre with the silver buttons on his yellow jockey jacket. There are more different kinds of murder in those eyes of his than there is hell in a post full o' women."

Colonel Coldfoot resented this allusion to womenfolk as something more than a mere figure of speech. It was a gibe that bit him where the skin was thin. Yet, in the presence of this old man whom he already regarded as a subordinate, a discard passed over more than once in the picking of brigadiers, Coldfoot felt constrained to hide anger with a laugh. And he did laugh after a fashion. A moment later he was biting his lip. Colonel Brown was as grimly serious as a general court-martial.

"A post full of women," Coldfoot repeated, hastily. "Colonel, you are dead wrong there. That is Laem Tao, one of the big men of this district, and one of the stanchest friends the United States has."

"Perhaps," grunted Brown. "They got any business to transact—any complaints or petitions?" he demanded abruptly of the Moro interpreter. "No. Tell 'em to get the —— out o' here then—and to leave their spears and knives and dirks and guns with the guard when they call again. There's a general order against coming armed into camp."

"But," Coldfoot exclaimed, "the conciliatory attitude—your duty."

"I know my duty," retorted Brown, "and sha'n't forget that I owe a duty to my men. I'll not sit idly by and have a nest of thieves and murderers declare an open season for the potting of 'em. You may rest assured of that. If they want peace they'll get it, but not the kind of pacifying that lets 'em make a stalling ground of a U. S. Army reservation."

Colonel Coldfoot's heart was full of hatred as he rode off down the trail later in the day at the head of an escort that was to see him to Iligan on the first leg of his journey to the headquarters of the Department of Mindanao. The bitter, lip-chewing moodiness of his humor was in marked contrast to the jubilation of the men.

A GREAT joy had seized the camp. It ran all the way from the demonstrative jig, war-whoop and ecstatic burst of inspired profanity to the silent inward smile that is all the wider for being indulged in secret. The officers for the most part accepted the latter mode of expression as more dignified and in stricter keeping with the amenities of discipline.

For the moment, "Yankee Dan" Brown was the most popular man in Mindanao. To this popularity he added by reducing the guard.

"One man wide awake is worth half-a-dozen sleep-walkers," he said, drily. "Tell 'em to keep their eyes open and their trigger-fingers crooked. That's the best cure I know for fanaticism. And tell 'em this—the first sentry who can show me a dead Moro killed at night with a weapon in his hand is good for a sergeancy the hour he does it. Wake 'em up."

Whether the Moros were merely sizing up the situation or the soldiers were more alert, there was peace in the district for a time—an uncertain, hair-trigger peace, it is true, but a grateful soldiery gave the "Old Man" full credit for it and his popularity burned bright. Some of it he sacrificed, however, by insisting on practise marches in heavy marching order. The men growled at first and, later on, as the hikes grew longer and more frequent, they cursed the tyrannical "slave-driving" of the Old Man as cordially as ever they had cursed the cold feet of his predecessor, but yet with a note of respect that had been utterly lacking in the other case.

When the news of this disaffection reached Brown's ears his rugged, rather

somber old face cracked in a sort of grin.

"Let 'em swear," he said. "The more they swear the less they think—and this is a dashed bad country for overthinking."

For nearly two months these practise marches were the only break in regular camp routine. Then the expected happened. A coughing cry about eleven o'clock one night and the sentry on post No. 1 turned out the guard as a matter of course. The sentry on No. 2 had gone to his God with a cry for help in his throat, and the other sentry knew it.

Belted and disheveled, Sergeant Grogan came up from the guard-house next morning with the news.

"Well," he announced, "they got Jones last night."

The men of his company, at breakfast in the mess-tent, nodded grimly. They had heard of it before.

"Wonder what the Old Man is going to do about it?" remarked a young corporal.

"Do," sneered the company pessimist; "do what old Coldfoot did—do nothing. If it hadn't been for the way he slobbered over the blankety-blank gu-gus, and the fear he held 'em in, I wouldn't 'a' blamed him much. What can any of 'em do? They got to get their orders, ain't they—same as you and me?

"And how'll they get orders for to go out and do, with the dear good folks back home howling bloody massacree? Wha'd' a bunch o' lily-fingered lollops back in Washington care for a soldier more or less. Not the price of a beer when politics is in the air. And I don't blame 'em, either. It's them dear kind-hearted buckets o' slush what can't bear to think o' slaughter till the heathen is slashin' at their own coat-tails. Then it's a loud cry for the dough-boy, bless 'im—and may Gawd send his bullet straight.

"No sir, take it from me, all you roughnecks gotta go out and take your chance, and the harder you strain your eyes the quicker you'll get a disability—or the thin side of a kris across your neck. Yankee Dan or Coldfoot, it's all the same."

"Grotz is more 'n half right," Corporal Clancy, the ancient, admitted grudgingly, "though it ain't so discouragin', I take it, when you ain't made feel as though you'd ought 'o tip your hat to the heathen and turn out the guard in honor o' the man as cut your bunkie up. Pretty rotten though.

"These here small-caliber guns wa'n't built for close work on a dark night and the Moros are just cagey enough to know it. They hang on to your gun-barrel and hack —— out o' you with a crooked, bone-cleaving knife, and what can you do? Why, lay down and die, which is what soldiers are paid for, certain. But the pity of it is we can't go out and teach 'em why not in an honest daylight fight the mornin' after because them lovely Christian characters back home won't have it."

In the next few days Yankee Dan spoke sternly to the Dattos who came in at his call but they merely shrugged their shoulders or loudly lamented that they should be so cruelly misjudged. When he announced that he would seek permission to search the entire district for the murderer and the stolen gun the Moros shrugged again, one of the bolder impudently announcing that their "good friend," meaning Coldfoot, would see that they got justice. Which was true enough, if justice was identical with the withholding of permission to make the search.

The brief reply to Yankee Dan's request was tart and calculated to discourage. He could read Coldfoot's hand in every line of the malicious document. It pointed out that there had been no change in policy. The Moros were friendly and must be humored. Unless Colonel Brown could find some way to make his sentries keep their eyes open he would have to put up with a murder now and then. He was to obey his orders to the letter.

And there the matter rested for a time. Not for long, however. Men tired out by their tour of duty were loosening their belts in the guard-house when the report of a gun fired close at hand brought them a-jump to strained attention. There was a strangling cry and the sound of naked feet beating a quick retreat.

The guard turned out hurriedly to find Private Johnston dead in the grass behind the guard-house, his rifle gone and his head all but severed from his body by a terrible gash at the base of the neck. It was the last straw. Grimly they scoured the taller grass beyond the road in a vain search for the audacious Moro who had dared to "pot" a man on No. 1.

"Another good man gone," Sergeant Grogan muttered as he called off the searchers an hour later. He had come to regard such

events as unavoidable but resented their recurrence during his "tricks" at guard.

So did the gray-muzzled old colonel of the mirthless smile resent it. He was furious, and the fact that his fury was repressed made it all the more appalling.

"Another one, eh," Yankee Dan snorted. "And cut up within ten yards of the guard-house, eh. A fine bunch o' sleep-walkers. Good for dress-parade, perhaps, with a couple of policemen to keep the crowd back, but not worth much in Moro country. No wonder they laugh at you and cut you up. Got another gun too, eh?"

It was not a question, that catapulted "eh," it was a trap. But Grogan was too old a soldier to fall into it. He offered no excuses but waited stiffly at attention for what might come, while Yankee Dan changed slowly from glaring malevolence to musing soliloquy. Then Grogan knew for a certainty that matters were serious and his stripes in danger. He knew too from the milder light in the fierce old eyes that deviltry was brewing, for Grogan had known Yankee Dan of old.

"I'd hate to do it," mused Yankee Dan, shifting his gaze from Grogan to the sloping tent roof. "He's been a pretty good non-com.—but, Lord, what a frost as sergeant of the guard. No vigilance at all. Teaches 'em cleanliness and obedience and how to pull a trigger without jerking it, but can't seem to make 'em use their ears and eyes. It's more than a long-suffering blankety-blank old blank of a slave-driver can stand."

Brown, with the exception of the "long-suffering," had taken adjectives and nouns from the mouth of a member of Grogan's guard and Grogan felt his heart turn over and lie dead.

"Still," Brown continued, "I'd hate to bust this poor old man. I certainly would. But I've either gotta have vigilance beforehand or satisfaction after. 'S true I'd a leetle rather take it out of our murderous brown friend, but how'm I going to nail that knife-swingin' bird with every Datto in this district keen to shield him?

"This fellow Bengowhui, now—we are camping on his land, our next-door neighbor, so to speak, and claims to love us like a brother—he could tell us something, no doubt, if we could only make him talk. I can't burn the seal off his tongue, however, by setting his barns a-fire, even though the murderers do cross his fields to cut us up. He's an *amigo*. I venture to say I could find a well of truth in him, though, if I wasn't all tied up in dignity and authority and red tape. If I was foot-loose—a sergeant, say—I bet I could wring a sincere whisper out of this cagey old rascal, and without putting my neck in a noose, either. By gad. Maybe Grogan could. I'll try him."

"Grogan," he demanded, with a swift change to direct address, "do you know I've got you marked for the horrible example? Would you like a chance to provide Johnston's murderer as a substitute? Oh, you would, eh. Well, I'll give you seven days in which to find him out. If you haven't found him on the seventh you might as well tell those stripes good-by.

"I'm not going to tell you what to do or how to do it. That's up to you. But remember, be diplomatic. A slip might land you in Bilibid. It certainly will if you pull off any rough stuff on our little brown brothers—and I catch you at it. All I've got to say is this—use your head and watch your step. If you can't be vigilant, for —— sweet sake be careful."

THREE hours later Datto Bengowhui hurried into camp, two strides ahead of his troubled parasol-bearers, and demanded audience with Colonel Brown. Yankee Dan received him outside his tent. Breathless from haste and indignation, Bengowhui gestured frantically for several moments, then launched into a voluble tale of outrage, the gist of which, as it reached Colonel Brown through an equally voluble interpreter, was simply this—that some soldier of evil heart and heritage, forgetting decency and friendship, had lashed the tails of two *carabao* together and had sent them, scythe-like, on a lumbering stampede through a field of standing corn. The rope, of native make, had arrived by now in the hands of a belated attendant and, at an angry sign from the Datto, was offered in evidence.

There followed an amazing dissertation on the rules of evidence in which Yankee Dan pointed to the fact that the rope was native made, challenged Bengowhui to indicate the soldier whom he suspected and finally wound up by opining that no soldier of his could be so heartless. Perhaps some other Datto, inspired by envy or a desire to make trouble between good friends, had

caused the doing of this outrageous thing.

Bengowhui shook his head in anger, but stopped sputtering when Colonel Brown started on the rules of evidence again. He listened hopelessly for half a minute, made two feeble attempts to interrupt, and then, dazed but dignified, led his flock of attendants off in the midst of the dissertation, without so much as a "beg your pardon."

The things that happened to Bengowhui in the next few days were trivial, but cunningly contrived to discommode and irritate. It is scarcely necessary to recount them, yet they led to an historical event. Once a growing coconut exploded, shattering Bengowhui's favorite palm—or so the badly rattled Datto believed until his shield-bearer found a clock wheel imbedded in a bit of the wood. And with each fresh mishap Bengowhui hastened to Yankee Dan.

So six days passed. On the seventh, Bengowhui came earlier than usual from his stilt-borne shack half a mile away. He was wrangling with a sentry for admission to camp a full hour before reveille, thereby taking his life in his hands, but the sentry conducted him in safety to the sergeant of the guard, who held him at the guard-house as a guest despite frantic protestations, until Colonel Brown had breakfasted.

The meeting of Datto and Colonel was a mere meeting of casual acquaintances insofar as Colonel Brown's attitude could show. There was nothing calm or casual, however, about the Datto's bearing. From veiled threats and impassioned demands for justice, on pain of complaining to Coldfoot, himself, Bengowhui had grown truculent overnight and openly hostile. He was a-quiver with rage. The accursed dogs of soldiers had burned his barn!

Colonel Brown shrugged his brows.

"Come with me," he said, and led the way through company streets to the far side of the camp.

Bengowhui followed, brimful of rage, but half diverted from his murderous thoughts by wonder. His puzzlement increased when Yankee Dan, extending a lean arm dramatically, pointed to a smoldering, four-square bed of ash in which the fire still breathed. For a brief space there was silence. Then Bengowhui, bristling, demanded angrily:

"In the name of Allah, what has that to do with me?"

Yankee Dan turned on him savagely.

"And what in —— has your dashed barn to do with me? Did I set it afire?"

"No, but some dog of a soldier did at your direction."

"You lie," Yankee Dan retorted coldly, his blue eyes boring straight into the flaming black of the other man.

Now a Moro may lie, and usually does, but it is a mortal affront to tell him so. Besides, Bengowhui was overwrought, his courage unimpaired but his nerves unstrung. Keyed to this pitch the men of his race frequently run amuck and, casting aside all thought of consequences, die slaying for the sheer glory and joy of it.

Bengowhui's face grew mask-like, then was contorted with the lust for blood as he whipped a crooked-edged dagger from the folds of a shawl that hung across one shoulder and dug the ground with his toes in the act of driving the keen blade home.

Swiftly as he had moved, however, Colonel Brown was quicker. It was as though a man had stopped a moving body dead in mid-flight. The knife-hand imprisoned at the wrist still held the dagger suspended between the stiffening fingers of the straining man, but the sweat of agony was beginning to appear on the Moro's brow as Yankee Dan's hand bore down with all the weight of his sinewy form depending from it.

The colonel's orderly reached for his revolver in a panic, realizing all at once that they were out of ear-shot of camp and hidden from it by the commissary shack. Already Bengowhui's attendants, a half-dozen in number, had followed their master's lead in producing weapons from unseen parts and were surging forward when Yankee Dan panted—

"Tell them to stand back."

Bengowhui's knees bent slowly. A groan, wrung from his very soul, it seemed, sprang to his gaping lips as the bones of his right forearm bent almost to the breaking point. The other wrist, too, was fast in a grip that bruised the flesh.

"Stand back," he gasped in the vernacular.

"Drop—the—dagger," panted Yankee Dan, "and we—we can—resume—our—talk. Perhaps—I—may—overlook this—if—your—future conduct—indicates—regret."

A moment and the dagger dropped point

down. It was still quivering as Yankee Dan plucked it from the ground.

"Tell your men to throw theirs there," he said, and indicated.

This order sullenly obeyed, he resumed the conversation where it had been broken off.

"You say that my men fired your barn. Suppose I should say that your men did this," and he pointed to the smoking ruin.

"The loss of this is of no consequence, yet it might have been the stables or the commissary building," he continued frankly, but failed to add that the old building was to have been demolished in a few days to make way for another and that he had ordered it burned at daybreak on learning that Bengowhui had had a fire.

Bengowhui, now torn between sullen anger and a tendency to tears, all but sobbed:

"Neither was my store-house of much value, señor, but it is the horror it portends. My own house might be the next to go, and my wives perish. I have suffered much in the past few days."

"I know, but why do you say my soldiers did it? Is it not more likely that a common enemy of ours has fired both our barns?"

Bengowhui drew himself up with a semblance of his old pride and spoke in a voice that quivered with proud conviction.

"Because, of all in this district, only yours would dare. Those Moros from beyond—I know their every move, and they know I know—a pack of jackals that cut throats by night, but I would go out by day and hew them down, ten for each one of mine."

"So you know *all* they do," said Yankee Dan so softly that even the keen-eared Moros grouped ten paces back did not overhear. "Then you know who cut up my sentry eight days ago. Tell me that—in strict confidence, one man to another—and I'll forget the rest."

Into Bengowhui's eyes there dawned slowly, chasing the sullenness that had smoldered there, a new light of respect and one closely akin to admiration.

"It would be as much as my life is worth," he said in a voice as low as Yankee Dan's. "Even some man of mine might seek to assassinate me if it were known that I informed, but I have never been in sympathy with those who smile by day and slay from behind by night. And this Colonel Coldfoot. Bah! How was I to know that all Americano Dattos were not of his breed? Would he have thanked me? No. Nor would I have told him—not for a thousand guns. But you—you have taught me much. You are a man. It was Laem Tao's sword-bearer."

To Laem Tao forthwith went the command that he deliver man and gun to Yankee Dan within three days, and to Yankee Dan came this reply:

"If Colonel Brown wants this man and gun let him come and get them."

Laem Tao had grown bold and impudent with too much petting.

THE colonel's thin lips, as he heard the message, played for a moment in an ugly grin and the smoldering eyes flared up, but he merely uttered a single "ah" in a subdued and peculiar tone. For a time he was silent. When he spoke it was to the regimental adjutant.

"Too bad we can't give this bloody old rascal a romp, eh, Sammy?"

"He's looked for it long enough," Sammy retorted drily.

"But, you see," Brown continued, as though seeking to justify himself, "we are tied tight, Sammy. What's the order say? Fight only in self-defense—or something like that. You see, we'd have to get permission, and we'd not get it most likely. Well, we'll request it anyway. Make out your report tonight. Too bad Colonel Coldfoot isn't here."

Lieutenant Samuel Welford made a noise that sounded suspiciously like a snort.

"What's that?" snapped Yankee Dan.

"Noth—nothing, sir," the adjutant assured him hastily. "I—I was merely thinking."

"Huh! Thinkin', eh! Must be —— funny thoughts you have." Then, plaintively:

"Sammy, in another year it will take an infantry brigade with mountain batteries to do what I could do right now with my handful of dough-boys. This Laem Tao is setting a bad example. But orders are orders, Sammy. Always remember that, my boy. By the way, what battalion goes out day after tomorrow?"

"The second, sir."

"Think I'll try 'em out myself. Post No. 1, eh, and a six-footer, too. By gad, but I'll make 'em sweat. By the way,

you might tell Major Hardy he'll be relieved. No need for both of us. That'll mean one happy man in camp, anyway."

A few minutes later Colonel Brown called for his "dog-robber."

"See that my side-arms are in good shape," he said, "and put an edge on that old cavalry saber—a hair-cutting edge. A better one, mind you, than you put on those safety-razor blades."

The soldier-valet acknowledged the order with a quick, "Yes sir," and a precise salute, but the language he used when clear of the colonel's tent was vividly and volubly improper. For an hour he sweated over the saw-edged saber, testing the edge with a hair now and then. And each time the edge refused to take hold he flung the hair from him with another burst of hushed but impassioned oratory. Finally he took his troubles to the colonel.

"Sir," he said, "I've about wore out this whetstone and I can't put any razor edge on this blade. Bum steel it seems to be."

Yankee Dan took the saber, ran his thumb along the edge, then critically inspected the point. Suddenly he directed the point at the tent-pole and executed a few rapid passes with amazing accuracy and poise. For the moment he re-lived those days in the Academy when he was the marvel of the corps—as invincible as one of the Twelve Peers of France. He was a lean man, usually calm and unhurried in his movements, but put sword or foil in his hand and slowness fell from him like a cloak.

The "dog-robber" observed and was convinced. That request for a razor edge was not persiflage but madness. The Old Man was mad!

By a supreme effort of the will the "dog-robber" controlled the instinctive muscular contractions of an inglorious stampede until Yankee Dan recollected and dismissed him, whereupon he sidled off to spread the report that the "old tyrant" had become a raving maniac.

"Dammit, Sammy," demanded Brown next day, "why do the men stare at me as though I were some strange animal in a zoo?"

"They are looking for cuts," Welford explained in a strangled tone.

"Cuts," Brown repeated sharply. "What the devil do you mean?"

"Don't take offense, sir," Welford begged, "but, you see, that man of yours, he's been telling the men you shave with a cavalry saber and—and they are looking for results, I presume."

Brown's stern old face registered the shadow of a smile that was just a wee bit foolish.

"Scorch his skin," he growled. "Has he been saying that? And they believed it. Think I'm crazy, eh. Well, I'll show 'em how crazy I am tomorrow."

On the morrow Yankee Dan walked briskly along the lines of companies, scanning each man sharply, fishing into haversacks, testing fitness and equipment generally.

"All right," he announced, "we'll break new ground today."

When this ground was indicated, the men, marching at route step, began to swear. Starting from the camp near the east end of the lake, Yankee Dan had headed due north toward ground never negotiated before for the simple reason that it was almost impassable. To the left of their line of march it was quite impassable. There, weed-choked arms of the lake cut back for miles to a rim of hills almost as difficult.

The second battalion fumed with indignation. Not content with breaking their backs under preposterous loads, this mad old colonel would soon have them scrambling goat-like over heart-breaking country under a blistering sun. But the killing pace soon stopped the swapping of profane opinion. The men settled to their work, muttering curses to themselves when they spoke at all. Never was there such a blankety-blank blank old idiot—but that could wait for the camp talk afterward. This was too raw and brutal, too painfully exacting for immediate expression.

At eight o'clock the hike was three hours old and the rim-hills had been won through a dancing heat haze that had made them look like a "movie" picture pantingly at rest. Here Yankee Dan ordered a fifteen-minute rest. At noon he scolded several stragglers.

"A mule," he announced with grim humor, "would take these infernal rocks without breaking his fool neck. I don't see why a soldier can't. I'm older than most of you and I do it, don't I?"

"Yes, and bray too," one of the stragglers muttered savagely to himself. He was nursing a bruised shin—"It was made for mules and goats and madmen."

When Yankee Dan gave the order to fall

in, a few minutes later, there wasn't a member of the battalion who did not expect to head back to camp. Even then it would be night before they could regain it. Consternation overwhelmed them when Yankee Dan gave the order to keep right on. The senior captain ventured to remonstrate.

"It's all right," Brown explained. "The boats are waiting beyond the swamps. A little further and we can strike straight for the lake shore. We ought to make it in three hours."

THE good word passed along the column in an ascending note of jubilation. They were going back in boats!

For the first time since the sun began to burn through sweat-soaked khaki and thin underwear the men stepped forward with something like sprightliness and spoke without cursing their luck, each other and the man who led them. The Old Man, after all, was not quite the slave-driver they had thought him.

The flash of good humor passed, however, soon after plunging into the tall grass of the lower levels where dust showered from each dry blade and puffed up with every footfall. The still, breathless heat seemed to have sifted into the grass and packed there. It was a far cry from the swamps they had been circling all day, this dust-dry, throat-searing heat.

The column was coughing curses and dust, gouging sweat from eyes that stung, when a peculiar rustle near its head caught the attention of those who were near enough to hear and wise enough to understand. Sight was served almost as soon as hearing, for the thing that had made that sound was charging—a *juramentado*, naked kris in hand every nerve and muscle taut with the fanatical fury of the Mohammedan man-killer.

There was no mistaking the object of attack. The crooked blade of the kris was hanging over Yankee Dan's head before any one could stir a trigger finger.

The men had no time to gasp. Yankee Dan seemed as good as dead. But in the space it takes most men to shake off the paralysis of complete surprise, the colonel's old cavalry saber leaped into action.

With a single movement Yankee Dan parried the kris and plunged the point of the saber into the Moro's throat with a twisting drive that laid open a great gaping wound and sent the point jumping out at the back of the Moro's neck. Colonel Brown was taking no chances. A Moro had been known to charge a battalion on parade with a dozen bullet-holes in his body and still take toll of the battalion before he dropped.

But a gaping wound in the throat is another matter, discounting many bullets—unless the bullets happen to be dum-dums, and the rules of civilized warfare bar the use of such.

When the senior captain reached Yankee Dan's side the latter was drying the blade of his saber on a handkerchief.

"Captain Muncie," he said, "you will please bear witness that this was done in self defense."

The senior captain looked sharply at the grim old warrior. What was he driving at—could he possibly be joking—and where in gosh-whang-its name were his nerves?

"However," Brown continued, securing the kris and touching its edge thoughtfully, "I'll keep this as a souvenir. It beats me, the edge these fellows get. Now that old saber of mine——"

A cheer that swept into a wild hurrah put an end to the colonel's monologue. His popularity was suddenly revived ten-fold, had flared up in a marveling hero-worship.

"Cut it out," Yankee Dan commanded testily as he spun about on a dusty heel. "It's a deplorable thing—a poor misguided *amigo* running on to a friendly sword—furthermore, if you fellows had been alive I wouldn't have had to soil it."

"You were directly in the line of fire," Captain Muncie hastened to explain.

"Lucky for me I didn't have to depend on their fire," the colonel grunted. "However, we'll forget it."

An hour later the battalion debouched into a clearing of dry rice paddies. Directly ahead and about four hundred yards away was a Moro cotta, moated, and walled with great banks of stake-crowned earth. The clearing was about two miles long, the cotta a half-mile from the western end. It was the fifth cotta they had seen that day, but the others had been seen merely as dim outlines in the distance. The men gazed curiously, and as they gazed there came a spurt of smoke and a bullet shrilled overhead. A moment later the report came to them against the wind. Colonel Brown looked hurt.

"They are firing at us," he cried. "Or is it a salute?"

Again Captain Muncie looked sharply at Yankee Dan, and as promptly looked away. A cloud of smoke had puffed from the side of the cotta—a dense black cloud that suggested the springing of a mine rather than the discharge of ordnance.

A moment later, however, a railroad spike came skipping across the rice paddies and buzzed to an angry stop within a dozen feet of Yankee Dan. He sauntered over and picked it up, then dropped it hastily, cursing from a full heart as he stamped about and wrung a blistered hand. For the moment Yankee Dan had forgotten that a missile thrown from a brass cannon by black powder is likely to be hot. Several bullets whined overhead before he recovered his composure.

"We'd better get out o' this," the colonel spluttered. "From the sound of some of those bullets I'm thinking they have guns that belong to Uncle Sam. B, C and D companies will take cover and deploy, A company will retire two hundred paces——"

"They have fired on us," Colonel Brown was saying to his captains and adjutants a few minutes later. "We can't turn back—even if it were possible to reach camp before nightfall. The whole country might rise against us, cut us to pieces in the grass as they cut up the Spaniards at Mimungan, if they thought we were whipped. On the other hand, a detour to reach the boats would bring these fellows swarming out to harass us, and the advantage would be all with them.

"In my opinion our only safety lies in taking this cotta. And that's what we'll do. Sending out a man to kill me and then firing on the Stars and Stripes. Why we'd go through a mob of our own people like shot through a paper target for less than that."

"So," thought Welford in a flash that amused while amazing him, "that is why the old gray fox would bring the flag along. All honor to him!"

"But the order about shelling cottas before storming them," one of the junior captains ventured. "Do you think it's safe?"

That safety part was merely an unfortunate slip in phrasing a suggestion, and Colonel Brown knew it. To have orders fired at him again on top of burnt fingers and a grueling hike was too much, however. He glared, and snapped:

"Certainly not. We aren't playing tennis. As for shelling the place, if you've a mountain battery about you I'll use it quick enough. If not we'll have to worry along with gun-butt and bayonet. . . ."

"As I was saying," he continued pointedly, "the plan is simple. I'll take A company around their flank. B, C and D companies will remain here under Captain Muncie.

"You, Captain, will advance by short dashes at ten-minute intervals until you are close to the moat. That ought to give me time to make their rear. When you hear the bugle you'll go at 'em as though the devil were behind you and paradise one jump ahead. Meanwhile, keep 'em hugging dirt."

Captain Muncie saluted without comment, though his heart was hot. A company was his company, and it would bear the brunt of the attack. He wanted to be there. The sop of having charge of the larger body on the wrong side of the cotta did not appeal to him. But the colonel was in charge, and the colonel was leading A company away as Captain Muncie swallowed his disappointment and gave the order to fire at will.

The Moros at first attempted to reply in kind but, as the Americans found the range and bullets began to spray them with dust, gravel and metal splinters, they were glad to hug dirt as Colonel Brown had foretold.

TEN minutes later a Moro showed himself for a moment as the soldiers threw themselves down at the end of the first dash. He ducked back to cover hurriedly, however. A dozen bullets had kicked dirt in his eyes. An hour later B, C and D companies were within one hundred yards of the moat. And now it was no longer dirt that the Moros drew when they showed themselves. One red-jacketed fighting man, filled with an insolent bravado, stepped into full view for a moment and was swept away by a gust of steel-cased bullets.

The men were scrambling up for the dash that would bring them to the moat's edge when the faint notes of the bugle called them to the charge. Captain Muncie barked out an order and the dash became a wild, tempestuous race, three companies of infantry advancing on the run and yelling as they ran. Obstacles were surmounted without apparent thought or pause. For the time, obstacles did not exist. Those

who could swim formed life-lines and dragged their comrades across the moat, half-drowned. They swarmed up the slope of the embankment somehow, and through the sharp stakes at the top with hand, foot and gun-butt. The resistance they met with was so feeble as to be actually disappointing. The reason was plain.

Nearly all the Moros, about five hundred, were swarming around fifty or sixty white men, who were hanging together in a sort of V, ramming into the jam of brown men with gun-butt and bayonet. At the angle of the V was Yankee Dan, revolver in one hand and saber in the other, walking coolly into the thickest of the fight, cutting, thrusting and firing as he advanced. Already the Moros had begun to draw away from him as B, C and D companies piled pell-mell through the hedge of stakes. It was short work after that. Hemmed in on all sides, most of the Moros threw down their arms and begged for quarter.

Yankee Dan marched straight to a ladder that leaned against one of the dwellings, and mounted it. As his head cleared the door-sill a kris licked out. Several men shouted a warning. Rifles were raised. Neither was necessary. Yankee Dan had been prepared for this, but in his awkward position did not parry quickly enough to save the rim of his campaign hat. The next moment, however, he had disarmed the Moro by striking him on the knuckles with the back of his sword.

Then Laem Tao appeared. Yankee Dan had seized him by the knot of hair on his head and was dragging him down the ladder. Once on the ground Laem Tao drew himself up with as much dignity as the point of a sword against his ribs would permit and tried to keep from flinching when the point pricked his skin.

"As long as I am here, I might as well have that man," Colonel Brown said softly, "and the stolen gun. Where are they?"

"Señor," Laem Tao replied, "the man is dead—and I should be. But you—you wounded me twice with that devil's sword and—and—I fled. Señor, I think you *are* the devil."

"Sammy," remarked the colonel later, "I'm thinking we won't have much more trouble with our friends."

But Colonel Coldfoot, now a brigadier, could not see it in that light, and all but frothed at the mouth on discovering that Colonel Brown's laconic report of happenings in the Lanao offered no loophole for attack. To make it worse another officer with a "pull" walked into Coldfoot's office some weeks later with warm praise on his lips for Colonel Brown.

"Say, General," he exclaimed. "You were wrong about that old war-horse, Brown. Been talking to Muncie—on his way back to the States, where slivered bones heal better—he tells me every man-jack in that outfit is swearing by him. Call him 'Dan of the Sword,' and are presenting him with a fancy article. Have raised five hundred dollars, and could have raised ten times that, Muncie says, if the officers hadn't put a limit on subscriptions. Even the Moros have turned hero-worshipers, it seems.

"You know, I wish we'd had him recommended for promotion instead of knocking him in that report. The Chief would have done it with the least bit of encouragement from us. I'm sorry. They say his sword-play is wonderful."

"I'm not sorry," Coldfoot flared back. "He ought to be in jail. He went out in cold blood to stir up trouble with that Datto, A red-handed murderer he is—the blood of all those people on his head."

"Oh, I don't know. I'd give my chance of promotion for the privilege of standing in his shoes. They're a man's size, man!"

"He's a murderer, Dick," Coldfoot insisted, almost tearfully. "We can't prove it—that whole outfit would perjure itself for him, I have no doubt—but it's true."

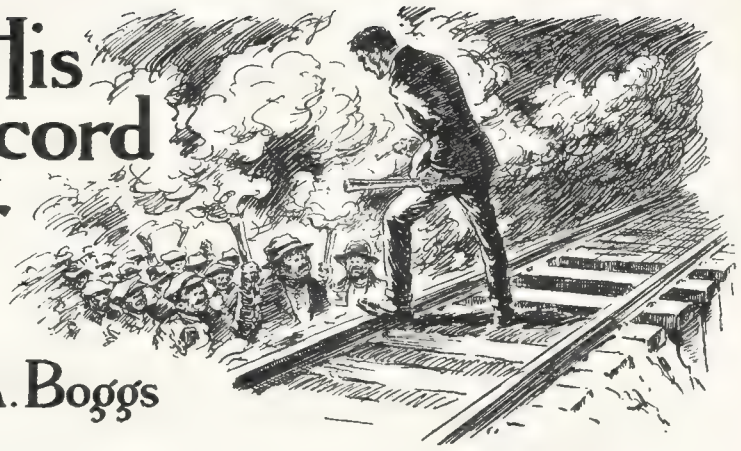
"I wouldn't advise you to let Captain Muncie hear that perjury talk," Dick retorted coldly. "And don't say 'we.' I don't want to prove it."

A quick gesture, half warning, half entreaty, turned Dick's attention toward the door. Mrs. Colonel Coldfoot stood there, fully as tall as Dick and wonderfully made. In her glorious blue eyes was a shining light that matched the golden glory of her hair. Both men displayed embarrassment, not so this vigorous young Diana. However, as her glance flashed from Dick of the robust and red-blooded ideals to Coldfoot the cautious, her smile underwent a subtle change and her eyes narrowed perceptibly.

For a moment she seemed to study her uneasy husband, then, turning swiftly to the younger man, she said impulsively:

"Do you know, I'd dearly love to meet this terrible old man."

With His Record Clear



by Russell A. Boggs

Author of "The Last Wire," "The Pride of McNeal," etc.

NOW this is the way it started. Along back about two years ago when business was slack and carloads of freight were objects of vigorously solicitous pursuit instead of being, as now, an overwhelming flood that chokes and blocks the yards and terminals, the Middle Division of what we will call the A. B. & C. railroad—because, of course, those are not the real initials—had an unwise, hasty superintendent named Barnes—J. G. Barnes.

How he had ever become superintendent was somewhat of a mystery. If you asked old Carruthers, and if he knew you to be discreet and canny, and if he was in the proper mood, he would explain the matter something like this:

In the first place—and a thing that explained much—J. G. Barnes had a good, watchful godfather in the person of a certain uncle, a very high official of a certain other system which largely controlled the destinies of the A. B. & C. And this uncle, having decided that his budding nephew should become a railroader, had had him placed in the office of the agent at Thornville, in order that he might start in at the bottom and work up—old Carruthers was always careful to add this last if there happened to be an agent present.

In three months the agent at Thornville, who feared neither uncles, officials nor devils, delivered an ultimatum.

"You can have either Barnes or me," he told his then superintendent. "But one of us has got to leave Thornville."

As a result—because the agent at Thornville was a most excellent agent and it would never do to lose him—Barnes had been jerked from there and put in the chief dispatcher's office where he could learn the mysteries of schedules, tonnage and power. And the chief dispatcher, having for six months endured Barnes's blundering, had at last come to the end of his patience and had had the nephew kicked out.

But, being in fear of the uncle, he was very careful to see that Barnes, instead of being kicked out and down, was kicked out and up into the division operator's office.

Then his incompetence in the division operator's office had resulted, shortly, in another transfer, he this time landing up in the train-master's office, and the train-master, a steady man and a patient, had suffered him for a term until even his endurance gave way and he dispatched Barnes, with secret rejoicing, into the division superintendent's office, where, for a time, many of his failings were smothered by the efficiency of older and wiser clerks.

However, in due course he drifted from there and was turned over to the general superintendent's care. When, not long afterward, the superintendent of the Middle Division was transferred to the Eastern Division, leaving a vacancy, the general superintendent, driven desperate and with the threats of the uncle in his ears, he wanting to know why the general superintendent didn't do something for his nephew, had pulled all available wires and strings and broken precedents, and as a consequence

Barnes, the prodigy, to his own complacent surprise, was made superintendent of the Middle Division—where he proceeded to bluster and blow over everything and nothing—but, being surrounded by a proficient staff and having a wonderfully efficient chief clerk who carefully censored his orders and bulletins, he managed to scrape along.

That is the way Carruthers would relate it; and surely he ought to know, he being the oldest conductor in the service, with a surpassingly keen ear for underground gossip. And when he had told it so to his friend, young Joseph Donnelly, agent at Maple Creek, he added that he could see no hope that he—Donnelly—would ever rise, he being much too good an agent to ever expect to become an official.

So there was Barnes in his high office when the depression set in and revenues commenced to fall off. Then came orders from the general offices to reduce expenses. Therefore, immediately, clerks were furloughed by the hundreds and train crews were taken off by the dozen.

Everywhere possible things were cut and slashed to bring down the operating expenses. And circulars were forwarded to all agents to cut down, cut down, and tables were sent showing the distance in miles and fractions that a ton of freight had to be hauled in order to bring in enough revenue to purchase a pencil, or a pen point, or a pack of envelopes, and to save, save, save. Which tables greatly impressed and edified the "boys" and filled them with fear—so much so that they at once ordered on their requisitions a double quantity of the usual supply of the various articles named lest there come a sudden shortage and a stoppage of the things needed.

And after he had reduced all the big things to the lowest possible notch, Barnes turned to the little things, and one of his pet hobbies became the subject of lights. Every light not absolutely necessary, he decreed, should be turned out during the hours of daylight. It became sort of a mania with him, and he went ranting and raving around seeing that the instructions were obeyed.

He boarded No. 77, westbound, one bright Spring morning and took up his position on the rear end of the train in order to see what he could see over his division.

Everything went pretty well until they pulled through the little town of Maple Creek. As they passed the little depot there, Barnes beheld, at the extreme western end of the platform and on the curb of the street which crossed the tracks, a lamp-post with an iron plate fastened to it showing the name, "Maple Creek"—and the gas light inside the globe was burning, brightly!

The superintendent uttered an angry snort, and then with flying pencil wrote a message in his ever-ready note-book and dropped it off at the next telegraph office. So that young Joseph Donnelly presently received these words over the wire:

AGENT,
Maple Creek.
See circular No. 394 and turn out platform light immediately.

J. G. BARNES.

Superintendent Barnes went to the end of his division and came back that afternoon on No. 78. And when he passed Maple Creek again he perceived, to his indignant amazement, that the light still burned. He seized his pencil and pad once more. And directly Joe Donnelly received another message:

AGENT,
Maple Creek.
See my wire this A.M. and turn out platform light without fail. See that my instructions are not disregarded in the future. J. G. BARNES.

THREE days later Barnes came through Maple Creek again, on a light engine this time. The light was still burning!

"Hey!" yelled the superintendent to the engineer. "Stop here! I want to get off."

The engine stopped and Barnes hopped off. He bounced across the platform to the light, grabbed the chain which hung down and that controlled the gas, gave it a jerk—the light went out. Then he stormed into the office where old Carruthers, his train in the clear on the siding, was chatting with young Donnelly while waiting for orders.

"Didn't you get my instructions to turn out your platform lights?" cried Barnes to young Joe, boiling.

"Yes sir," answered Donnelly.

He regarded his superintendent with singularly calm, steady eyes.

"Then why didn't you comply with them?" raged Barnes.

"I did," said Joseph, shortly.

He did not like to be talked to in that manner, by any one.

"You did!" shouted Barnes—his voice had been gradually mounting until it was nearly a scream—"You did! How about that light at the west end of the platform?"

The agent peered out of the window.

"Why," he said mildly, as if in surprise—"why, it's out."

"Yes," shrieked Barnes, "it's out because I just turned it out, myself. I want to know why you do not follow my instructions. Why didn't you put it out?"

"Well," said Donnelly, facing the superintendent squarely, "I'll tell you."

He glanced out the window again, saw a man he knew come hurrying onto the platform, then hastened with his explanation, a faint sparkle suddenly appearing in his eye which only Carruthers, seated in the corner with studiously inexpressive face, noticed.

"You see," explained Joseph, carefully, "I had no right to put that light out. It doesn't belong to the railroad—the borough owns it. For three years I tried to get the company to put a light there because it's a dark, dangerous crossing at night, but my requests were always turned down. I mentioned the matter to some of the borough councilmen one day and they said certainly it was a bad crossing and if the railroad would not put the light there they would. And they did—name-plate and all. It's not even on company property, being on the curb, that way. So they might not have liked it if I had turned their light out."

Young Donnelly hesitated a second and held his embarrassed, flustered superior with a steady eye.

"Besides," he concluded as he perceived the man he knew pass the office window, "there is a borough ordinance against turning out street lights."

There was a step in the waiting room and a square, heavy-set man appeared in the office doorway. He looked at Superintendent Barnes.

"I'm the constable," said the heavy-set man, turning back the lapel of his coat to show his badge—

"You're under arrest."

"What!" exploded Barnes. Things were coming too fast.

"I am? For what?"

"For turning out that light. I was standing on the corner and saw you do it."

"But you can't arrest me. I'm Superintendent Barnes—the superintendent of this division."

Barnes was in a panic of rage and mortification.

"You can't arrest me!"

He turned to Donnelly for support.

"Sorry," said Joseph—"that ordinance, you know."

The constable was a determined man. And he once had had a shipment of household goods smashed up on the railroad and he'd been waiting ten years to get even—the mention of the superintendent's name and position only made him all the more resolved.

"Makes no difference," he told Barnes, shortly. "Come along."

And the superintendent, willy-nilly, fuming and red in the face, protesting with hands and words, was led before the local justice of the peace. It cost him ten dollars.

And that is the way the thing started. For of course the tale spread. It was much too good to keep. All over the division it went, and then all over the other divisions. Wherever two or more employees met they retold the tale of the platform light and slapped their legs and guffawed with abandon.

And if Barnes, coming unexpectedly upon his men, interrupted them in the midst of laughter, and if they fell suddenly silent and eyed him strangely, he knew at once of what they had been talking. Likewise it spread among the officials and the bigger ones twitted the unfortunate superintendent about it mercilessly.

Hence Barnes came to hate the name of Maple Creek, the town—and the agent there. For, with the strange perverseness of his narrow mind, he placed it all upon Joe Donnelly. To himself he cursed Donnelly, and vowed vengeance, and swore he'd make his life a Hades.

And for six months he did, to the best of his ability. He sent spotters out to watch the agent at Maple Creek, sly men who attempted to bribe Donnelly to break some of the company's rules and regulations, or tried to catch him up on tricks of change in buying tickets. He had inspectors and traveling auditors drop in on Donnelly at unexpected, frequent intervals, dubiously solemn men who strained every effort to discover something wrong.

He accused Donnelly of being late with

his daily car reports and other data, and his daily balances, and weekly and monthly reports to the general offices suddenly developed a singular knack of disappearing —which brought hot protests and rebukes from the offices to which they had been destined.

However, Joe Donnelly had not been agent for five years, all for nothing. He knew a thing or two and he was perfectly aware why he was being persecuted. He watched himself closely, conducting his duties with care and discretion. Consequently they got nothing on him.

Nevertheless it was most unpleasant and, after enduring it for a half year, his contempt for such pettiness overcame him and he asked for a three months' furlough, hoping that things might possibly blow over somewhat in that time in case he returned. But he hardly expected to come back to Maple Creek—not if he could in any way avoid it. He'd hit up some other line for a job.

THE request came to Superintendent Barnes. He was in a particularly bad humor that afternoon anyway, having been up the biggest part of the preceding night at the scene of a wreck where ten steel hoppers of coal had become derailed and upset, blocking the main tracks for eight hours.

Moreover, General Manager Treeman had just wired him that he, Treeman, and President Banninger were coming through on No. 3, westbound, that night and they wanted the superintendent to go with them—they wanted to see him. Barnes knew what they wanted; they wanted unpleasant details and explanations about the derailment which had thrown schedules and everything into a jam.

Barnes snatched up the letter from the desk.

"Wants a furlough, does he?" he exclaimed.

He glared angrily at the sheet for a moment. He had plenty of extra agents, due to the recent reductions in forces, he reflected. He chewed his lip. Then he brought his fist down upon the desk with a bang that made his chief clerk jump.

"All right," cried Barnes. "I'll let him have it—all he wants."

He swung about to his chief assistant.

"Here," he exclaimed, "write him this."

Then he paused as a new thought came to him.

"No," he concluded, vindictively, "wire it to him. That'll give all the agents along the line a chance to hear it."

He dictated the message.

About five o'clock that same afternoon young Donnelly heard the division relay office calling "MC" "MC"—Maple Creek—on the wire.

"I am 'MC'," answered Donnelly.

"Hr msg (here message)," came from the division office.

And this is what Joe got:

J. DONNELLY,
Agent, Maple Creek.

Referring to your request of Sept. 29th for furlough. Relief agent will relieve you tomorrow Oct. 1st. Your services for some time have been entirely unsatisfactory and after tomorrow will not be required further. J. G. BARNES.

Joe Donnelly slammed his pencil down upon the telegraph table.

"Well I'll be eternally jiggered," he cried, and added some other things not so polite.

He wrathfully held the message before him while he read it over again. And then, abruptly, he burst out laughing.

"Fired!" he gasped. "Fired! From this."

His eye swept around the mean little office and again the humor of it overcame him.

"For the love of mud. I ought to thank him!"

But, nevertheless, after a little he became sober and anger returned to him once more.

"But that's no way to do," he reflected, resentfully.

For he knew that it made a black mark against his record—a black mark that would stand against him when he applied somewhere else for another position, and he knew that he did not deserve it, he knew that it was the final act in Barnes's vengeance—and fierce, mounting wrath possessed Joe Donnelly that such a man should hold such power over him.

He sat considering it for quite a while, darkly—over that and the hard years he had put in here at Maple Creek—all for his reward. His gaze dwelt somberly upon a string of a half-dozen camp cars away down the track, set off on a short spur about midway between the station and the old wooden hundred-foot trestle that spanned the stream of Maple Creek some five hundred yards east of the station.

And presently he saw Tom Fagan, foreman of the extra-gang, arrive there with his crew of fifty or more negro huskies who had been brought from south of the Mason and Dixon line to take the place of the foreign laborers gone home to take part in the war. They had been filling in around the abutments of the old trestle where recent high water had washed away the banks dangerously, and now they flung their picks and shovels beneath the camp cars and made haste toward the station.

Joe Donnelly aroused himself when he saw them coming. It was pay-day and they were coming after their money, joyously. He drew the package of checks from his pocket and waited.

Tom Fagan's wrinkled face was first in the doorway.

"Good even'," he grinned. "We're lookin' for goold."

"Come in," Joe invited, "and gold you shall have."

He opened the office door for Tom to enter, after which, with Tom to identify, he stood at the ticket window for fifteen minutes issuing the pay drafts to the dusky children as they filed in.

There was much talk and laughter and showing of gleaming teeth as the men received their pay, and childish banter and pompous boasting. Yet through it all ran a trace of rivalry, for the gang was about equally divided between Maryland negroes and Kentucky negroes, the uncrowned king of the first being a big, muscular buck known as "JJ," and the leader of the Kentucky following a tall, wiry fellow called Big Jim, both being aspirants for dominion over the entire company.

Harmless rivalry it was, ordinarily, but with the coming of pay-day and the immediate prospect of much bad gin in sight it imperceptibly developed a dangerous note, things with edges to them lurking under the chaffing words that passed between the rival factions and leaders.

"What you draw, nigger?" bantered JJ to Big Jim.

"I drawed 'nuff," proclaimed Big Jim, largely non-committal.

"Well, yo' mout jest as well hand it right ovah to me now," said JJ.

And he and his crowd laughed long and loud, for they knew that on the last pay-day JJ had cleaned Big Jim of his last cent in an all-night session of coon-can.

Big Jim glared sullenly.

"Not dis time," he said and went outside.

As fast as they received their checks the colored men disappeared around the corner and down the street. One minute after the last man got his, Tom Fagan looked out the window. There was not a negro in sight.

"There'll be riot and ruin this night," said Tom, "and no work tomorrow. They've all gone over to Snyder's saloon."

"Yes," said Joe, "that's so."

His mind was on his own case.

"And no work tomorrow—for me, either."

"Have you got your furlough?" asked Tom.

He knew Joe had asked for one.

"Yes," said Joe. "A good long one. I'm fired."

"What?" cried Tom, incredulous. "What's that you tell me?"

"I'm fired," repeated Donnelly. And he told Tom how it was.

When Donnelly had finished Tom Fagan shook his big, red fist above his own head.

"I'll tell you, bhoy," he exclaimed bitterly. "I'll tell you that in all the twenty years I've been on this division I've niver seen it so bad mismanaged as it's been since this Barnes man took holt. 'Tis a shame, say I. The dirty scut!"

RIOT and ruin, as Tom Fagan had forecast, broke out just before midnight in JJ's camp car where Big Jim had come to retrieve his lost fortunes at cards. Almost without exception the negroes were crazily, gloriously drunk, gradually working themselves up to the fighting pitch, and the ones who were even partially sober probably wished they were not—the way it stood they could not sleep, anyway.

It was a matter of a misplaced ten-cent piece that precipitated the trouble.

JJ claimed it as his. Big Jim did likewise. They arose to their feet, calling each other hard names, their voices high and raging. They grappled before either could reach a weapon—and the hot stove, full of glowing coals, capsized in the resultant shock. The two fell apart, and they and their followers, scrambling from benches and straw-filled bunks, went tumbling through the doorway to the ground. The doors of the other camp cars flew open—heads popped out—the inhabitants came running.

The burning coals from the overturned stove found a nesting-place on the floor amid the litter of straw pushed from the bunks in the hasty exit. Tongues of flame shot up. In a moment the interior of the car was all ablaze.

A few of the crowd, recovering from their first panic, started forward to attempt to extinguish the fire. But JJ sprang before them.

"Let 'er burn!" he yelled wildly, exultantly.

It was a good opportunity to show them all what a really bad man he was, and he picked up the half of an old tie lying at his feet and sent it crashing through a window of the camp car, to add to the blaze.

"It's my fire," he whooped. "Let 'er burn!"

Tom Fagan, in his own private camp car which served him as headquarters and lodging-house, was aroused from his uncertain slumbers by the extraordinary hullabaloo and the glare of the flames. He jerked on his clothes and hurried out.

"You black divils," shouted Tom, coming up to his men. "Who did this?"

The two leaders stood slightly apart, their recent altercation forgotten in the new sensation, the following of each grouped behind him, and Tom stopped between the two, shaking an accusing finger from one to the other.

But dangerous sullenness was his only answer as he glowered into the dusky faces about him, the light of the flames playing upon their gleaming, drink-crazed eyes.

"Tell me," cried Tom again, "what man has done this?"

But still not a word came from his men. And all at once it seemed to be borne in upon them that this was but one white man against many of themselves—boldness came to them and from the rear of the crowd came a loud, derisive laugh.

Tom Fagan's face flamed with rage. He clenched his big fists.

"Big Jim," he shouted, "did you start this fire?"

He knew of the enmity between the two leaders and suspected revenge.

"Wuzn't me," denied Big Jim, sullenly.

JJ was bolder—that laugh behind him had steeled his nerve. He laughed mockingly.

"Let 'er burn," he cried. "I answers no questions."

That was too much for Tom Fagan. He leaped forward.

But JJ saw him coming—he was expecting it. He took one step back—a pick handle was thrust into his hand by a thoughtful henchman. JJ struck a wide, sweeping, drunken blow at the advancing Tom. It found its mark, hard, on Tom's leg, midway between knee and thigh. The foreman sank to the ground with a groan.

A wild yell greeted Tom's downfall, loudest from JJ's crowd. Their madness mounted to frenzy, the liquor burning like fire in their brains.

"Dere, nigger," shouted the exulting JJ to Big Jim. "Dat's de way I does."

This last exploit was a master-stroke.

"Yo' ain't got no nerve, nigger. Yo's afraid. Yo' can't do nuffin'!"

Big Jim, overwhelmed, said nothing for a minute. He perceived nervousness among his backers, signs betokening imminent desertion. His pretense to leadership was tottering—he must do something, quickly, to offset JJ's ascendancy. He stared at the leaping flames, and suddenly, by some queer, unexplainable freak the burning camp car and the old wooden trestle where he had been working seemed to mix strangely in his seething brain. A grand idea flashed upon him.

"Is I 'fraid?" he yelled. "Is I? Yo' follow me, JJ, an' yo'll see!"

He pointed at the flames.

"So dat's yo' fire, is it?" he shouted, tauntingly. "Dat's yo' fire. What kin' of a measly, little, no-'count fire is dat, anyway? I'll show yo' a fire what is a fire."

Big Jim bent forward and snatched a flaming brand from the roaring camp car.

"Come 'long," he yelled. "Come 'long an' see a fire what yo' can see. I'll burn de tressel!"

For an instant his daring held the crowd silent; but for an instant only. Then, their whole beings filled with fierce, primitive desires, they greeted his words with a wild howl of approval. And while a dozen eager hands also snatched blazing sticks from the fire several others grabbed cans of lamp-oil from neighboring camp cars, the whole assembly followed Big Jim up the tracks.

JOE DONNELLY had locked up the station carefully after the last train had departed that night. His last full day as agent at Maple Creek was finished. Afterward, his heart filled with the

smoldering anger of injustice, he had wandered morosely about town for a couple of hours, and finally had gone to the house, about five minutes' walk north of the station, where he roomed and boarded with a private family, and then to bed.

Shortly before twelve o'clock there was a heavy footstep upon the front porch just below Donnelly's open window, and there followed a loud banging on the door.

Donnelly awoke. He put his head out of the window.

"What is it?" he called.

"The coons are burning their camp cars and raising Cain generally," informed the man below, a belated citizen. "I was just on my way home and happened to notice the fire. You better go see about it."

Joe looked toward the tracks. He saw the glow in the sky.

"I guess I better," he agreed. "Thanks."

He ducked his head inside and jumped for his clothes. He heard the belated citizen depart down the walk, and as he dropped his pistol into his coat pocket he heard a clock downstairs strike twelve.

Six minutes later Joe Donnelly reached what was left of the burning camp car. The flames were licking about the adjacent camp cars on either end, but to his surprise he could not see a soul around them. Then wild shouts came floating to him up from the tracks, and looking that way he beheld the bobbing lights. He heard a groan, and there, to his further amazement, he saw Tom Fagan stretched upon the ground.

"Tom," exclaimed Joe, bending over the foreman. "What's happened?"

Tom Fagan looked up, a sudden hope showing in his pain-racked eyes.

"'Twas that coward JJ did it," he said. "My leg's broke. But never mind me. Joe, bhoy, them two drunken blackguards, JJ and Big Jim, was boastin' which was the most bad, and to prove he was, Big Jim boasted he'd set the trestle on fire. Go stop 'em if you can, for the love of God!"

"The trestle," cried Joe.

He looked up the track again to where the lights were flickering in the darkness. A flashing, horrible thought came to him and he examined his watch.

"Tom," he breathed, hoarsely. "No. 3 is due in eight minutes!"

"Yes," said Tom, writhing with pain and the horror of it. "Go bhoy—go! That old trestle'll burn like matchwood. You're only the one against many, but if you can hold them off till 3 goes, your full duty will be done."

Young Joe Donnelly leaped erect.

"I'll do it," he cried. "So help me—they'll not burn it for 3 to run into!"

His eyes fell upon the pick handle where JJ had dropped it. He snatched it up, and with flying feet sped after the waving lights.

He caught up with the gang just before they reached their destination. He sprang past them, and, whirling about ten feet from the edge of the trestle, faced them, his pick handle in his left hand, his drawn pistol in his right. The light of their flaming brands flickered upon his set, grim face.

"Stand back," he shouted into their amazed faces. "The first man that comes one step nearer gets this."

He waved his gun, threateningly.

They halted, unconsciously milling into two parts—the Maryland crowd and JJ on Donnelly's left, the Kentucky gang and Big Jim on his right. For a moment fear seemed to seep into their fevered brains. And then Big Jim saw a taunting smile upon JJ's face. He knew what JJ meant by that smile—JJ was waiting for Big Jim to carry out his boast, it was up to Big Jim to deliver or his power would be forever gone; and JJ thought his rival would not dare. Big Jim lurched forward.

"Git away, white man," shouted Big Jim. "She's goin' to burn!"

And to cover his advance he threw his flaming torch straight at Joe Donnelly's head.

Joe ducked, firing two wild, uncertain shots as he did so. And then Big Jim and his followers were upon him. The pistol was knocked flying from his fingers. He grasped his pick handle with both hands and laid about him.

Negro skulls and skins are hard and thick but a good pick handle is harder and thicker, and Joe Donnelly was no small man. There were howls of anguish as the big stick played upon them, and for a moment Joe held them, then drove them back a step.

JJ and his neutral gang shrieked with glee as their rivals recoiled, and they yelled scathing taunts at them. And Big Jim screamed horrible curses at his pack, the while he nursed a handful of broken, shattered fingers. His abuse and their own hurts and shame combined to arouse every

hidden savage instinct within them. And now the lights danced on glistening steel in their hands.

"Come on," screamed Big Jim, and once more they surged to the attack.

Joe Donnelly, listening with straining ears for No. 3's whistle, knew this was the end. Well, he'd get one or two, anyway. He clutched his pick handle and brought it down with all his strength upon the foremost woolly skull. The fellow dropped like a log between the tracks.

Then they were all upon him again. Tongues of steel licked at him, hands clutched and tore at his garments, hands grabbed at his flying flail. A sharp edge scraped across the back of his hand, he felt a stabbing pain in his left shoulder, blood trickled down his forehead and he shook his head savagely to keep it out of his eyes.

By sheer weight of numbers they pushed him back a step, and their wild yells redoubled as they pressed in. He gave way another foot.

"God!" he thought. "Will 3 never come?"

He put his last ounce of strength into his aching, straining arms. Big Jim's evilly distorted face danced in front of him. He swung his pick handle squarely into the demoniacal features.

A LONG, loud whistle split through the uproar. Menacing hands dropped. The pack listened with startled ears.

Again that long whistle blasted through the night, terrific, like the roar of an avenging god. And with it sudden fear and reason appeared to return to their primitive brains. With cries of panic and fright the horde dropped their torches, and gathering up their hurt and helpless fellows they fled into the darkness. Joe Donnelly staggered to the edge of the right-of-way.

No. 3's headlight swept around the curve just beyond the trestle, and at sight of those flaming brands upon the tracks her whistle screeched again, and sparks flew from the wheels as the air-brakes gripped. Sliding, protesting at the strain, No. 3 came slipping over the trestle. The engine slid past Joe Donnelly, the express and baggage cars, the smoker, the day-coaches and sleepers. The rear end of the last coach, a private car, stopped right beside him.

All along the train, doors banged, lanterns appeared, feet came hastening back. The drawn shades of the private coach went up, the door leading to the observation platform was opened, and there, before Joe Donnelly's eyes, appeared Superintendent Barnes, General Manager Treeman and President Banninger.

They stared down at the tattered, bruised figure standing beside the track, the lights of the coach shining full upon his face, a battered, crimson-stained pick handle clutched in his bleeding fingers.

"Donnelly," exclaimed Barnes, for there was enough resemblance left to recognize the agent at Maple Creek. "What's this? What's the matter?"

Joe Donnelly drew a long, deep breath and moistened his dry lips.

"The extra-gang negroes decided they'd burn the trestle," he said. "I was afraid No. 3 would fall through it, so I tried to stop 'em."

Some sudden feeling of elation filled him. He'd fought a good fight—he grinned.

"I guess I did," he finished.

They heard him with amazement, speechless for an instant. President Banninger's eyes fell upon the still blazing torches, then went back to Donnelly.

"Man," said Banninger, "you're hurt. Come in here."

And with his own hands he opened the shining brass gate and helped the reluctant Donnelly into the luxurious, deep-cushioned car.

"I'm all right," protested Joe as he sank into a chair beside a little table in the center of the compartment. "Nothing but a few scratches here and there."

He examined the back of his hand, felt tenderly of his stinging shoulder and carefully touched his bruised forehead.

The conductor, worried about his schedule and the time they were losing, stuck his head in the doorway.

"I've stamped out all the burning sticks on the tracks," he said. "There are several camp cars burning on the spur just ahead of us, but they look to be past all chance of saving. Everything else seems to be O. K."

He looked inquiringly at his superiors. "We better be moving?"

But Banninger had decided there was something interesting to be learned there first.

"No, not yet," he commanded. "Let your flagman stay out. We'll let you know when we are ready to go."

Joe Donnelly leaned forward suddenly.

"Yes, and there's Fagan, too!" he exclaimed.

"Who is Fagan?" asked Banninger.

"Tom Fagan—foreman of the extra-gang," said Joe. "He's lying down there near the camp cars with his leg broken, and needs looking after. I think he was trying to hold his negroes in and they turned on him."

Banninger swung around to the conductor.

"Have the porter give you a mattress from the sleeper, take a couple of men, and go get Fagan," he ordered. "We'll take him along with us and see that he gets to the hospital. See if you can find a doctor in any of the coaches, too, and if there is have him see what he can do for the foreman."

And having given his orders he turned to Donnelly again.

"How did this thing start? What happened?" asked Banninger.

"Pay-day, you know," said Donnelly, as if that explained a lot.

"And lots of bad liquor and some bad boasts and rivalry led up to it, I guess," he added and then told them in a few quick words all he knew of the matter.

"By the Lord Harry," exclaimed Banninger when Joe had concluded, "here's a man. Let me shake your hand."

He slapped Donnelly on the back and wrung his hand, Treeman and Barnes following.

There was a trace of embarrassed restraint in Barnes's manner when he extended his hand. He hesitated a little then, shamefaced. He cleared his throat.

"Donnelly," stumbled the superintendent, "I—you got a message from me?"

"Yes," said Joe.

All his elation suddenly went from him. In the rush of recent events, the message and its import had been driven from his mind. Now it all came flooding back. He reached in his torn coat and took the message from a pocket.

"There it is," he said, laying it upon the table.

Banninger and Treeman had been listening with puzzled expressions upon their faces. They read the words upon the message form.

"What does this mean?" demanded Banninger, looking up, frowning.

Barnes hesitated uncertainly, and while he searched for words Joe Donnelly spoke up.

"Have you ever heard the story of the platform light at Maple Creek and how it cost Mr. Barnes, here, ten dollars to turn it out?" asked Joe.

There was no humor in his voice now. Nothing but grim earnestness matched the returning anger in his eyes.

Both Banninger and Treeman had heard the tale. They nodded soberly.

"Well," added Donnelly, then, "that's what brought that message. It was too much for Mr. Barnes's pride and he laid for me."

"But wait—wait," broke in the crestfallen superintendent, he having at last found his voice.

Things were going badly for him—he'd have to check these revelations, some way.

He looked around, beaming, his self-assurance coming back. He smiled at Donnelly.

"Of course, after tonight, I could never let that—that message stand," he said. "You'll stay at Maple Creek. I'll withdraw the order for your relief."

"You will?" flashed Donnelly, looking hard at Barnes.

That would leave his record clear. A thought shot into his head.

"You will withdraw this?" He held the message up.

"Yes," said Barnes.

Upon the table were pens and ink. Joe Donnelly took a pen and wrote beneath the words that were already on the message blank:

The above order and instructions are herewith withdrawn and canceled.

"If you will sign this, please," he said to Barnes, holding out the pen.

And when the superintendent had affixed his signature, with large good humor, Joe set down the date and the time, 12.35 A.M. He wanted things very definite in case of any question that might arise later.

"Now one thing more," said Joe.

He flipped the message over and wrote upon the back:

MR. J. G. BARNES,
Superintendent.

I herewith tender my resignation to take effect immediately. J. DONNELLY.

"If you will kindly write your acknowledgment on this and sign it, also," said

Donnelly, once more extending the pen to Barnes.

The superintendent and the other two officials looked from the paper to Donnelly, surprised, protesting. However they read only firmness and determination in his face.

"If you please," insisted Donnelly, again indicating the paper and the pen.

So the superintendent, plainly disturbed and unwilling, yet with no visible alternative left, wrote:

Accepted. J. G. BARNES.

And when the superintendent had finished, Joe Donnelly once more entered the date and the time, 12.38 A.M. Then he folded the paper and quickly got to his feet.

His record was clear.

"I EXPECT you have nothing further?" he said. His eyes questioned them. And as they said nothing he walked to the door.

Something like understanding and admiration shone in the eyes of the general manager and the president as they regarded that tattered, torn figure. They were wise men, and prudent.

"I'm sorry that you see it that way," said Banninger, simply, as Donnelly opened the door, "but of course you know best. And thank you." He held out his hand again.

But Barnes was neither so wise nor prudent. He foresaw another session of unpleasant explanations ahead, and he made a final desperate effort.

"You better reconsider your resignation, Donnelly—better think it over," he said, magnanimously.

He waited a second, and then, to make it more impressive, added:

"You're about all in. Ride down with us and we'll drop you off at the station."

And immediately after he had spoken the superintendent wished he had held his tongue. For Donnelly turned and smiled at the superintendent, an inscrutable, gently reproving smile such as one might use upon a persistent, blundering child, a smile that made Barnes squirm and that made his face color a fiery red.

"No," said Joe Donnelly, mildly. "No. I'll walk."

And he opened the shining brass gate and swung to the ground.

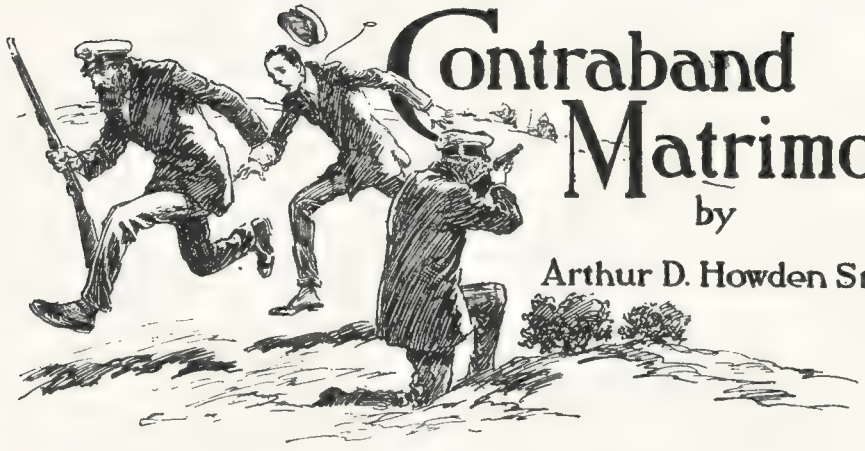
TOW-BOATING

by IRA SOUTH

DEEP-WATERMEN are right enough.
It's fine to see 'em warping in;
They drop down on our tow-boat decks
With tobacco and Jamaica gin.

And as we tow them 'cross the bar,
The long brave parting whistles blow,
And outside seas break on our decks.
I always fairly ache to go.

But round the harbor on a tug,
Though not a great, inspiring sight,
It's stick along the shore for me:
I see my wife and kids at night.



Contraband Matrimony

by

Arthur D. Howden Smith

Author of "Fair Salvage," "Primitive Christianity," etc.

I

McCONAUGHY entered the offices of the Red Funnel Line with the soul-warming satisfaction of the man who has sixty thousand pounds banked to his credit. The clerks in the counting-room whispered behind their ledgers as he passed, for he was a great man now. No other skipper stood so high with the managing director and the board, and it was even rumored that he was to be permitted to purchase an interest in the line.

To McConaughy the stir he created meant nothing. He nodded casually to a few underlings he knew and brushed through the swinging baize-covered door that led to the private offices. Here he found himself in a lobby. The door in front of him was labeled "Managing Director;" the door to his left "Board Room," and the door to his right "Captain's Room." As he hesitated a moment, a high tenor laugh echoed from behind the managing director's door.

"Haw—haw—haw. I say, you know—haw—haw—haw. Rather neat—what? Take your bally motor to the Esplanade—what? And I said to him——"

A deep bass voice rumbled indistinctly, and again there came a feeble "haw—haw."

McConaughy compressed his lips at the obvious English accent of that labored laughter, and turned into the door marked "Captain's Room."

"What ho, McConaughy? Back again, eh? Where from this time?"

The speaker was Captain Craven, port superintendent of the line.

"I'm from the States. Ma ship is docked. There was worrd the young leddy wished to see me."

"That's right. She sent word you were to come straight up." Craven leaned closer to him. "Who do you suppose is in there with her now?"

McConaughy shook his head.

"Lord Claragh."

"The Claragh Line?"

"Ye guessed it."

"An' what for would he be there?"

Craven raised his eyebrows and winked mysteriously.

"I think little o' his mannerr, judgin' by the seelly foolishness o' his laughterr," growled McConaughy.

"That was not Claragh," said Craven, with another wink. "'Twas his son, man—the Hon. Herbert Tibbotts."

"Whoever he may be, he's a fool—just that," rejoined McConaughy. "I could all but smell he was English."

This seemed to strike Craven as uproariously funny. McConaughy looked at him with pronounced disfavor.

"Ha' ye some jest?" he demanded.

"In a fashion, yes," admitted Craven, wiping away the tears which had run down to his face. "To put the case in a nutshell, McConaughy, Claragh's anxious to marry his son to Miss McNish."

"What? That brrayin' donkey from the London mews?"

"Yes."

"Hecht! An' ye do not rresent it, any o' ye?"

"Why should we? Lord Claragh was a shipmate of Miss McNish's father. He was the only Englishman McNish ever cared for. This marriage was something the two of them talked over years ago, when the children were small. Besides, do ye see, the old chaps were plain cracked on the subject of joinin' the two lines. Ye'll imagine what that would mean. The Claragh Line and the Red Funnel together. Where would be the Cunard or the Hamburg-American?"

"But do ye not think o' the lassie?" cried McConaughy.

"Certainly. But 'tis time she was finding a husband."

"Ay, but must it be a husband wit' a brray like a mule?"

"You're not fair to the young man, McConaughy. Lady Claragh she'd be, wi' her own coronet, an' the queen's friend."

McConaughy snorted.

"Ye're gone daft. All ye think o' is the line. An' what use or mannerr o' ornament would be a coronet for Miss McNish? She's well-enough wi'out such gewgaws. Friend o' the queen! She's a young leddy highly respected in Belfast by old an' young, wi' an abeelity for commerrce beyond her yearrs, an' a disposeetion unsourred by clabberrin' old lunatics like yourrself! What more could ye ask?"

"Well, well," said Craven peaceably, trying to smooth down the situation. "'Tis plain to see where ye stand, McConaughy. But my advice is that ye wait until ye have seen the young man and his father. He's a great man, Claragh."

"Ye're thinkin' more o' the fleet an' the increased powerrs o' the porrt superrintendent than o' the young leddy's comforrt, I'll venture," observed McConaughy dryly.

Captain Craven's ruddy face flamed with resentment. But the tinkling of a bell beside his desk cut off his hot rejoinder, and he disappeared in the direction of the managing director's office. In a minute he was back, still glowering.

"She'll see ye, now," he announced curtly.

McConaughy grinned.

"Hecht, Craven, ye'll not be put out wi' me for expressin' ma opeenions?" He thrust out a hand that closed like a hawser-bight on the port superintendent's. "Ye're too good a friend, man, for me to quarrel wi' overr some English pup."

Somewhat mollified, Captain Craven returned the grip. The door shut to behind McConaughy, and the port superintendent started out; but he paused at the sound of McConaughy's bull-voice as it roared a greeting to the managing director.

"Miss McNish! It does ma hearrt good to see ye again. An' all the men o' ma crrew send grretin's, wi' many rrecollections o' the kindnesses ye ha' done them. Ay, ma'am, we had a grrand voyage to the States. But tame worrk we found——"

Here Miss McNish managed temporarily to stem the tide, but in a moment McConaughy burst forth again:

"How do ye do, sir? I'm glad to know ye. Ye ha' been a mastherr, I'm told. In steam? That's well. Ay, an' yourr son. Young man, I like to meet yourr fatherr's son. But I canna say ye favorr him."

Craven laughed silently.

"Ye might know Miles McConaughy would not call any man 'me lord,'" he murmured. "He'd not call the king on his throne 'your majesty.' He'd give the king his just due, ye may wager. He'd call him 'king' and hand him a 'sir,' now and then, as befits a man o' position in the world. But he'd never let the king nor anybody else get from him any title that admitted another man was born to more respect than is comin' to Miles McConaughy."

And chuckling, Craven went out and shut the door after him.

II

McCONAUGHY had eyes only for Miss McNish when he entered the managing director's office. His keen glance noted the fine-drawn wrinkles newcome to her brow, the tensity of mouth, the indefinable shadow that masked her square-chinned, honest face. He knew there was nothing in the affairs of the line that could worry her to that extent, and instantly his anger seethed within him at the thought of the gossip of his fellow skippers and what it meant.

"Poorr lassie," he told himself.

There was one woman in the world, and only one, for whom Miles McConaughy was willing to check his feelings—and she was

Miss Tabitha McNish, managing director of McNish's Red Funnel Line. She had stood by him in the past. She had stood by his men, better still. McConaughy was never a woman's man. In fact, he was an ardent woman-hater, on general principles, and despite his Presbyterianism, entertained privately some Mohammedan notions regarding the probability of female participation in the joys of paradise.

But Miss McNish was different. There was something almost masculine, something that was certainly inspiring of trust, in the firm set of her jaw, the straight flash of her eye, the aggressive, open-minded personality that surrounded her. McConaughy often said to himself that if he had a daughter he would like her to be "the spit an' image o' the young leddy." That title, by the way, was by itself sufficient indication of the respect in which he held her. He knew no other "leddy."

So if Miss McNish wanted him, Miles McConaughy, to treat Lord Claragh and the Hon. Herbert Tibbotts with friendliness that was all there was to be said on the subject. Miss McNish rewarded his hearty response with a look of warm appreciation. Lord Claragh observed McConaughy with unconcealed interest. The Hon. Herbert Tibbotts, after one yawning glance, turned away and swung his dangling legs listlessly, whilst he surveyed the studies in oils of the steamers that decorated the walls.

It would be idle to say that McConaughy was unimpressed by Lord Claragh. There was not a sea-captain in the world ignorant of the story of the rise of this Liverpool lad from the bridge of a tramp-steamer to the ownership of the greatest one-man line in the world. Plain William Tibbotts, he had been, Bill Tibbotts to Miss McNish's father and the shipmate of his youth. Now, he was a viscount and baron, a peer of the realm, a privy councillor, friend and confidant of kings, builder of empire, hero of countless legends, participant in the financing of nations, dictator of the fate of ports, wealthy beyond the wildest dreams of Carthage and Tyre, demigod of the humble, symbol of attainment to mariners wherever his house-flag was known.

He was an old man, but a man still possessed of boundless vitality, whose gray eyes smoldered under heavily-thatched, white eyebrows, whose rumpled, frosty hair grew thick all over his massive head, whose huge, big-boned figure was held erect by the indomitable will that refused to submit to three-score and ten. He was known for a hard man. He never forgave a mistake. He was irritable, dictatorial, hard-headed, passionately wedded to his own way, a born egotist. But he loved a man for being a man.

"Ha," he growled in a rasping, deep-sea voice that had proved itself against the hurricane. "So you're Captain McConaughy. I've heard of you, Captain. You're a man after my own heart."

"And I ha' hearrd o' ye, sir," answered McConaughy seriously.

Lord Claragh chuckled.

"Doubtless," he agreed. "You're just in from sea, I hear. Have you salvaged any derelicts or confounded the king's enemies?"

"There are none such in the Norrth Atlantic lanes."

"That speaks well for the navy."

"Why wouldna the navy pen in half their strength or less?" flashed McConaughy. "Hecht, it's taken the English long enough to learrn the way. I lost ma own ship, the *William an' Mary*, out o' their dodderrin' self-suffeeciency that wouldna admit a Gerrman Dutchman could outwit them."

"Captain McConaughy has strong views on this subject," interposed Miss McNish hastily. "He had an unfortunate experience early in the war. You may have heard."

Lord Claragh chuckled again.

"The Bad Samaritan story, eh?" he said. "I heard. Well, a man with your record is entitled to his own opinion on naval matters. I'll not try to gainsay you. But what would you say if you were told the navy wanted your help?"

"Say?" snorted McConaughy. "Well, sir, 'twould depend on who said it, but I'd be sorre tempted to laugh in his face."

"I say it."

McConaughy hesitated and glanced at Miss McNish.

THE Hon. Herbert Tibbotts, who had surveyed every picture on the walls with ever increasing boredom, grew weary of his lot at this point and rose languidly from his chair. He was a tall, excessively thin young man, with a carefully cultivated stoop, a long, narrow face and ash-colored hair. He wore a

morning-coat, a monocle and a very lackadaisical air.

"Oh, I say, governor," he protested in an extreme Oxford drawl. "You're taking rather long to get to the point, aren't you? Why not put it to the Johnny straight, what? Perfectly simple matter. Ask him, and be done with it. Ah, don't you agree with me, Miss McNish?"

"Sit down, Herbert," said his father impassively.

The Hon. Herbert sat down.

"The fact is as I have stated, Captain," resumed Lord Claragh. "The navy wants your help. I have asked permission of Miss McNish to put the proposition before you. She has said it is for you to decide whether to accept it or not."

"That is quite true, Captain McConaughy," supplemented Miss McNish, "I think you'll be interested in what Lord Claragh has to say."

McConaughy sat down.

"I'll hearr ye," he said briefly.

A smile flitted across Lord Claragh's face. Here was no ordinary man, and instinctively he abandoned the arguments he had marshaled in advance, and told his story in plain, forthright terms.

"You know the North Sea?"

"Fairrly well. As a lad I was in trawlerrs off an' on."

"Then you know the North German coast up by the Danish frontier? The North Friesian Islands?"

"Ay."

"Good. It's a desolate coast—no need to tell you that. Sand-banks and shoal water for miles out to sea. Our war-craft have steered a wide berth of it, for fear of mines and because there were no advantages to be gained close inshore. There are no towns worth the bombarding, a fishing village, now and then, that's all. Now, for reasons I can't disclose, the Admiralty want more definite information of the seas between the Jutland Bank and Röm, the northernmost of the North Friesians. The task is not as easy as it sounds. Röm must be visited, the coast searched for information of patrols and military posts.

"It will also be necessary to enter Danish waters. The Admiralty wish to know for certain if the Germans have established themselves in any way on the Island of Fano, if they have planted mines in any of the Danish territorial waterways, where submarine bases could be located and where there are depths of water close inshore in which submarines might operate.

"For many reasons this work can not be done by a regular naval craft. Also, it requires a man of unusual ability and initiative, rather above the standard of the destroyer cub. It is dangerous, of course. Much more dangerous than periscope-potting off the Dogger Bank. But the men who go will be regularly commissioned as volunteer officers of the Royal Navy, and their crew will have regular status, as well. If possible, the work is to be done secretly and at night. For full success the enterprise should never become known to the enemy or to the Danes.

"I have just given the navy for this purpose my new speed-yacht *Saucy Mona*. She can do thirty-two knots or better, and the builders sent her over from the States under her own power. I designed her myself for fast going in rough weather. She'll stand up to anything that a destroyer can live through, and a dozen men can handle her. Will you take command?"

"Umph," grunted McConaughy.

"As to your cruise, you can make your own arrangements," Lord Claragh went on. "There is just one request I should like to make—as a personal favor. I want my son to go along as a volunteer. I can't let him go into khaki. It would not be right for my son and the man who will succeed to the Claragh Line to fight through this war on land. You see the point, I'm sure? I ask you, as a sailor, Captain McConaughy."

The frown which had been deepening on McConaughy's face lifted slightly.

"If the sea's in a man's blood 'twill worrk its will," he pronounced judiciously.

Lord Claragh hesitated.

"My son is—er—a fairly good sailor, I think I may say. I have had decided ideas about his career, Captain McConaughy. He has been two voyages to Australia as apprentice, and if it had not been for the war he would have made a number more. I believe a ship-owner should know his own problems."

The Hon. Herbert Tibbotts, who had been twining and untwining his legs throughout his father's lengthy speech, interrupted again.

"I say, governor, you haven't twigged it at all, you know. You've forgotten the

one bally thing that makes me jolly well worth while. Haw—haw—haw! I say, you know, Miss McNish, that's rather good, what? If I do say it myself, rather good. The fact of the matter is, Captain—Captain—oh, yes, Captain McHoneybee—I've been out in these submarine-catchers, and the governor fixed it so I could take a course in the machine-gunners school at Bisley. They tell me I'm a cracking fine shot with a Lewis gun."

Miss McNish had been tapping on the desk with a pencil during this oration. But she hastened to add—

"It's quite true, Captain McConaughy, Mr. Tibbotts is a first-rate gunner. Lord Claragh thought you might take him along as machine-gun officer, as the *Saucy Mona* has two guns—I think you said?"

She appealed to Lord Claragh.

"Quite so," he said. "But I haven't used what I think is my strongest argument of persuasion, captain. I particularly want you to accept this task, because I should like to have my son see active service of this character under your tutelage."

McConaughy shook his head.

"Ye'll do me the justice to believe I wouldna accept o' an underrtakin' as important as this out o' vanity," he said. "For the rest, ye must leave me to talk it overr wi' Miss McNish."

"Then you won't give me an answer now?"

Lord Claragh's bristling eyebrows drew down in a gesture of savage impatience.

"No," stated McConaughy calmly.

Lord Claragh started to say something, then shrugged his shoulders and laughed.

"You're in the right of it, Captain McConaughy," he admitted, "although it is not to my taste to await an answer. When may I hear from you?"

"Before evening."

"Very good." Lord Claragh turned to Miss McNish. "My dear Tabitha, you should go a little easy on yourself. The Red Funnel Line must be earning dividends every bit as large as the Claragh Line, so you have nothing of that kind to fret yourself unduly over. You're carrying too heavy a load, my dear, too heavy a load. As your dear father's friend, I can't stand by and see it, without a word of advice."

"And yet you are taking my best captain away from me," she objected with sudden bitterness.

Lord Claragh looked uneasy.

"Only temporarily, my dear, and you agreed it's what we call 'doing our bit'."

"Doing Captains McConaughy's bit, you mean. Ah, well, don't mind me."

"And shall you be in Liverpool next week?" pressed Lord Claragh, as he picked up his stick and gloves. "Then you'll dine with us, of course. Herbert is looking forward to it, aren't you, lad?"

The Hon. Herbert ceased munching the handle of his stick, stifled a yawn and agreed:

"Quite right, governor, quite right."

Lord Claragh gave McConaughy a handshake in passing toward the door.

"You're a man after my own heart, Captain," he repeated. "I'd like to hear the story of that salvage coup some time. It reminds me of my young days."

The Hon. Herbert likewise ventured a handclasp, but winced at McConaughy's bear grip.

"Ah—ah—charmed to have met you, Captain—Captain—ah—McHoneybee. I shall look forward to this—ah—voyage with you. Rather different from a chug-chug up the Mersey, what? Good, that. Haw—haw—haw. If I do say it myself, rather good, eh, Miss McNish?"

McCONAUGHY stared after him in dumb amazement. The Picadilly nut was as strange to him as a monkey on a stick. He had known many odd characters, but nothing like this. The idea of going to sea with such a person simply appalled him. He seriously doubted the young man's sanity. In fact, so worried had he been on this point that he had passed over without resentment the mistake in his name and the irritating drawl and lady-like punctiliousness of accent.

"Well?" said Miss McNish, breaking in on his silence.

McConaughy came to himself with a start.

"Hecht," he said, "I was wonderrin' was the young man sane."

She repressed a smile.

"I'm afraid he is, Captain."

Something in the way she spoke drew his attention.

"Ye'll ha' worrries on your mind, as the lorrd said," he exclaimed.

"Nothing worth mentioning. But tell me. Shall you accept Lord Claragh's proposition?"

A look of positive horror dawned on McConaughy's face.

"What? Go to sea wi' that loon?"

"Oh, he's not so bad. Besides, you must remember that it would be an undertaking after your own heart—a chance for fine seamanship, and perhaps a fight before you got back."

"Humph," grunted McConaughy uncompromisingly.

Miss McNish drew intricate patterns on her desk-pad.

"Lord Claragh did not tell you his real reason for the enterprise," she said suddenly. "He is deathly afraid his son will have to join the army. Anything would be better than that, and he looks upon his cruise as a sop to the authorities. If they will permit him to lend Mr. Tibbotts for occasional sea-forage he will be satisfied."

"The more ye say, the less prrejudiced I am for the mattherr," barked McConaughy.

"You mustn't consider me in making up your mind," she continued. "If you can be of any use to the navy, I feel that I have no right to withhold your services. At the same time, I shouldn't care to undertake the responsibility of ordering you or any of your men into danger."

"They'll be uncommon strrange to danger, ma men," commented McConaughy with unusual wit.

"Well, will you go?"

"For why should I inconvenience maself for the self-suffeecient English navy an' a man wi' no claim upon me but soft worrds an' a sickly son?" countered McConaughy. "Is there aught bir din' the Red Funnel an' the Claragh?"

Miss McNish shielded her face with her hand and continued to draw geometric patterns over the blotter.

"No," she said finally. "There is no tie between the Red Funnel and the Claragh."

She paused.

"Not yet," she added after a moment.

McConaughy gasped.

"Then there'll be truth in the yarrns I ha' hearrred?" he challenged.

"Well," said Miss McNish, smiling nervously, "if you'd only tell me the kind of yarns, Captain McConaughy."

"About your marrryin' that—that"—he jerked inarticulately toward the door.

She nodded.

"But—but—are ye daft?"

For the first time she looked up at him squarely.

"Captain McConaughy," she said, "I don't suppose you have the faintest idea of the pressure that can be brought to bear upon a woman in my position in a case like this. In the first place, my father and Lord Claragh talked about the—the—marriage"—she rapped out the word with a venom that impressed even McConaughy—"when we were children. It was the wish of my father's heart—one of the last things he said to me. Lord Claragh thinks that I would have a good effect on Herbert, steady him down, get him interested in the business. And he wants to see the lines brought together. Everybody has the same desire—even my own employees. Do you know you are the first person who has indicated opposition to the idea?"

McConaughy opened his mouth, then felt there was nothing for him to say.

"There is a stunning effect in concerted pressure by many wills upon a single individual," she went on. "You can not imagine how it affects one. I am conscious continually of all these people wishing a certain thing. It baffles me. It wears me down. I am not emotional, Captain, but I begin to feel as though it would be easier to give in."

A crooked smile twisted her mouth.

"Besides, you know, I'm getting on. I'm not so young as I was—the women all tell me that. Sometimes it seems it would be good to have a man to lean on."

"Ay, but not to supporrt," protested McConaughy. "If ye would ha' a man, lassie, tak' one will not expect ye to think for him. Ye're an extraorrdinarr' likely crreaturre, if ye will not mind ma sayin' so, an' 'tis plain rridiculous to suppose ye are requirred to bind yourself wi' a monkey in a paper-collarr."

"Why, you talk as if you meant it, Captain!" she cried.

"I do mean it, ma'am."

"I wish I had some more friends like you. But no. What is the use?" She shook her head sadly. "You'll be sailing off again presently, and then——"

McConaughy brought his fist down with a crash upon the desk.

"I have it," he shouted in a voice that carried out to the counting-room.

"You have what?"

"A—the—the—well, what ye might——"

He scratched his head uncomfortably.

"I'm just a bit excited, ma'am," he apologized at last. "But don't ye worrry longerr. I ha' thoughts in ma mind. Ye shall not do what ye willna."

"I'm sure I don't know what you mean. Have you——"

But he was at the door before she could stop him.

"Oh, Captain," she called as he slipped into the hall, "what shall we tell Lord Claragh? We had both better have the same story, so in case——"

"I'll be goin'," he answered briefly.

Surprise lighted up her face.

"You'll accept?" she exclaimed.

"Ay. If ye meant what ye said about givin' me leave."

"Oh, yes, to be sure," she replied vaguely. "But—but——"

" 'Twill tak' only a few days, wi' luck," he assured her.

"But why—you know Mr. Tibbotts is to go along?"

A satanic grin wreathed McConaughy's face.

"Ay," he said soulfully.

III

"SHE'LL be unco well-favored, I'll say that for her." Thus Jock Grant, McConaughy's first officer, as he cast an appraising eye along the *Saucy Mona's* hull. "But man, Skipperr, she fair shrieks o' the sinfu'ness o' rriches."

"I ne'er knew ye to disclaim the advantages o' wealth, Jock," remarked McConaughy dryly.

"Aweel, I'll nae deny I hae a properr appreeciation o' the value o' siller, but I wouldna spend it on a toy like yoñ."

"I believe ye."

They were joined on the dock by Evan Apgar, McConaughy's chief engineer, fresh from the engine-room. His face was still flushed with enthusiasm, and one hand crumpled a handkerchief, the only substitute for his pet ball of waste that he had been able to find.

"She'll pe t'e graandest pit craaft I efer tit see, whateffer," he exploded. "Engines like a waatche's works. An' clean! Why, I hafe peen eferywhere pelow an' t'ere is no tirt on me. So smaall an' so powerrful. T'irrty-two knots an 'our. T'ink o' it, Jock. T'irrty-two knots an 'our! When we got fourteen out o' t'e old *Joan* we t'ought we were doin' t'ings."

"She's a good boat o' her kind," agreed McConaughy.

"She's new to me," Evan went on. "I hafe hearrt o' t'ese motor-poats but nefer tit I see one pefore. Ye coult put her engines in t'e tingy an' row 'em ashore." He shook his head sadly. "Put I tell ye t'e truth, Skipperr, I caannot taake t'e responsipility o' engines I to not know."

"Don't fash yourself, Evan," returned McConaughy quietly. "I ha' seen to that. Claragh's own engineer goes along. He'll be under ye, but ma thought is that ye'll let him do all the worrk. I'll want ye an' Jock to help me in more imporrtant mattherrs. We'll tak' a picked crew. There's room for no more than twenty, an' the men we ha' will be busy all the time."

"She'll hae machine guns fore an' aft, I see," commented Jock.

"Ay. Young See-the-worrld is theirr keeperr."

Jock swung around with a wrinkle between his eyes.

"Ye'll mean the lad no harrm?" he asked. "I'm no wishfu' tae impute aught tae ye, Skipperr, but 'tis a——"

"Hecht!" said McConaughy impatiently. "He'll be in uniforrm. I ha' seen to that. His Majesty's Royal Naval Rreserrve —no less. Ye ken what that means."

"But they Gerrmans——"

"Leave mattherrs to me, Jock. I ha' thought all out. I trreasurre no evil intentions against the lad. He's a fool, but he can't help that. He'll come out bettherr an' wiserr for the experriences I ha' in storre for him."

Evan nodded wisely.

"Ye say truth, Skipper. A Gotless life he must hafe lifet, py whaat ye hafe tolt us. Atverrsity will pe goot for him. T'ere is naught prings religion to a man like t'e scourrge o' pain an' haart'ship. T'e young man is lucky."

"I hope he thinks so," remarked McConaughy grimly.

"An' wull there be fechtin'?" queries Jock with a wistful note in his voice.

"I canna say more than I ha', Jock. If the Gerrmans do not be plain fools an' incompetents—an' ma obserrvations so farr do not stamp 'em such—we must ha' some chance at 'em."

"Whaat apout t'e nafy's reasons for t'is pusiness?" asked Evan.

McConaughy shrugged his shoulders.

"I will na worrry about the navy's thoughts," he answered. "They ha' suddenly discoverred they know nothin' about something they should know all about. So they send us to discoverr it for 'em. That's the navy's way, an' as it is exactly what I should expect 'em to do, I see no prroblem to be solved."

"Good," rumbled a deep voice behind them. "There's a man who isn't afraid to speak what he thinks."

McConaughy turned slowly to face Lord Claragh, who was accompanied by Miss McNish and his son.

"I ha' neverr concealed ma opeenion yet, sir," he returned calmly. "If the Admirralty everr want it, 'tis their's for the askin'."

Lord Claragh chuckled.

"I'll wager. Who are these men with you?"

"Ma firrst officerr, Mr. Grant. Ma chief, Mr. Apgar."

Lord Claragh shook hands with each.

"I've heard of you two. Like skipper, like crew, eh? Wish I could be conscienceless enough to pry you away from the Red Funnel."

"Ye couldnae, sir," stated Jock simply.

"Eh?" Lord Claragh looked puzzled.

"He'll mean our serrvice wi' Miss McNish is na an affairr o' pounds an' shillin's," explained McConaughy.

The bushy eyebrows of the Lord of the Claragh Line, master of fleets and argosies, bent together in a straight ridge. Then he decided to laugh.

"How I envy you, Tabitha," he said. "There are no men in my line I could say that of."

Miss McNish looked almost beautiful at that moment.

"They mean it, too," she said.

"We do," endorsed McConaughy.

"The feminine influence goes for something, then," remarked Claragh with a touch of pleasant cynicism.

But McConaughy frowned.

"'Tis a mattherr between honest Christians, that's all," he said.

"Humph, I wish I could find some of the same sort of Christians. Any time you want—but I'm not a recruiting sergeant. Tell me what you think of the *Mona?*"

"She'll do."

"If she lacks anything you have only to ask for it."

"She'll do," McConaughy repeated. "Wi' the engineer ye spoke o' and the storres cited in the indents we shall be all rright. I'll tak' twenty o' ma own crew."

The Hon. Herbert Tibbotts returned from a saunter up the dock in the interests of diversion, in time to overhear this last statement.

"I say, governor," he volunteered, "don't you think the old tub would do better if we had a navy man or two along? No offense to you, Mr.—that is, Captain—Captain McHoneybee."

McConaughy's teeth showed for an instant between his tight-drawn lips, but otherwise he restrained the sudden murderous impulse that took possession of him.

"No, Herbert," Lord Claragh said firmly. "I see no reason for employing navy officers. In fact, the Admiralty people are particularly anxious to give Captain McConaughy a free hand."

"Quite so, quite so. But then, you know, governor, it's no child's play, this driftin' up to Germany's front-door and rappin' to see if Kaiser Bill is home. I say, Miss McNish, not a half-bad way to put it, what? I'll try that out at the club when I get back, eh?"

Miss McNish, with an appealing glance at McConaughy, put a resolute hand on the Hon. Herbert's arm.

"Come, and show me how the machine guns work," she said.

"Oh, rather. But I didn't think you were interested. It's like the girl at the Variety who meets the old codger in the antiquary shop, you know, and he says, 'Why, bless me, my dear, I didn't know——' "

They disappeared toward the speedboat's fo'c's'le, and McConaughy slowly regained control of himself. Evan was muttering openly.

"You said something, Mr. Apgar?" asked Lord Claragh.

"Naught," snapped Evan.

"Ah. And what do you think of the *Mona's* engines?"

"Goot enough, inteet."

Lord Claragh turned to Jock.

"Did you notice the steering-gear?" he said. "They tell me she can all but turn on her tail."

"She'll be weell-foundit," conceded Jock.

Lord Claragh looked somewhat humorously at McConaughy.

"I'm glad you all like her. And I do think she'll stand up for you. But it doesn't matter whether you bring her back or not—so long as you get the information you are after. Remember, though, I'd rather see you all safe than anything else."

"We ha' lived through worrse nor this is likely to be," said McConaughy.

"How soon can you get away?"

"Any time ye say. Tomorrer mornin'?"

"That will be excellent."

Lord Claragh looked around him nervously. Then, satisfied that no eavesdroppers were present, he continued—

"I think it only right to tell you, Captain McConaughy, that I am particularly anxious to keep my son incommunicado, as it were. He is, I may say, inclined to be susceptible—especially to young women. I have learned lately of an incipient affection which has sprung up between him and a person—a—a—to be frank, a theatrical person. It is not the first. I have—well, I have paid substantial prices before. I regard this enterprise as a God-send, if it suffices to keep him out of the way until she can be disposed of. I have plans for my son, which make it necessary that he should be protected against those who impose upon his good-nature."

"Do ye tell me so?" replied McConaughy. "Hecht, sirr."

And while he affected to blow his nose he winked vigorously at Jock and Evan, who wandered off presently behind a dismantled landing-stage to give vent to their mirth.

"He's suscepteeble, mon," appealed Jock. "He's tae be kepit in—what did the auld lorrd say?"

"I caannot tell'ee," rejoined Evan. "Put we'll keep him so, Jock."

"Ay, he'll be weell keepit care o', puir loon."

IV

THE knife-bow of the *Saucy Mona* sliced through the first foam-capped surge off White Head, then swung northward on the course by the Maidens, that isolated clump of rocks crowned by a lighthouse off the Ulster coast, a scant hour's run from the mouth of Belfast Lough. Trawlers and destroyers of the submarine patrol, charged with keeping the North Channel free from the German commerce raiders, were the only craft they met. So vigilant was the patrol that there was little danger from the elusive under-sea boat, but McConaughy judged precaution wise, and he traveled at twenty miles an hour, an easy clip for the *Mona*, with lookouts fore and aft and his machine guns uncased and ready.

An hour and a half passing the Maidens, they sighted Rathlin Island. Off to starboard was the Mull of Kintyre, and as they dropped the rocky coast of Ireland abeam they struck the heavier swells that boomed in from the North Atlantic, checked only by the Hebrides. In a short time they were out of sight of land, and to McConaughy's intense delight the Hon. Herbert became painfully ill. Abandoning the for'ard machine gun, which he had insisted upon serving, the heir of the Claragh Line succumbed groaning in the scuppers. McConaughy saw to it that more than one wave-top licked over him, but he never stirred, except to gulp and groan.

"A bonnie laddie tae be ownerr o' kittle ships," said Jock Grant disgustedly. "Wad ye e'er dream de was the son o' his daddie? He'll hae nae mair o' the sailorr i' him than sensabeelity."

"He'll ha' been severral voyages to Austrralia, the old man said," answered McConaughy.

"Ay, an' ye'll ken fine what that meant," returned Jock. "The ownerr's son, an' a' hands fashin' theirrselves tae mak' siccar wi' him, bowin' an' scrapin' an' bletherrin'. 'Are ye sick, Mr. Tibbotts? Dinna fyke ye'reself wi' duties ony lad i' the crew may do juist as weell. Lie ye doon i' ye're cabin an' rest.' "

"Hecht, there na talk the like o' that on a vessel I command," declared McConaughy. "Ma young lorrd will ha' had rest enough by now."

With which he abandoned the little bridge, raised man-height above the deck, and strode down upon the luckless Tibbotts.

"Mistherr Tibbotts!" he called.

The Hon. Herbert made no answer.

"Mistherr Tibbotts!"

A groan was the only acknowledgement.

McConaughy stopped, seized one shoulder and yanked the limp figure to its feet.

"When the mastherr o' a craft, whetherr navy or merrchant marrine, calls to a memberr o' his crew, officerr or seaman, he expects instant answerr," he said sternly.

"Mind that, ma laddie. Your fatherr's son should know bettherr."

The Hon. Herbert dashed the salt water from his face and essayed weak anger.

"Wh-wh-what do you mean, my—my—good man?" he chattered, for he was really cold and miserable. "D-d-don't y-you know m-my father is L-l-lord Claragh? You sh-sh-shouldn't speak t-to me like th-that."

McConaughy held him off at arm's-length and surveyed him steadily for as much as a minute. Then he delivered himself of a speech which was quite incomprehensible to the Hon. Herbert.

"Ye poor drowned rat o' a misbegotten side-swipe o' fantastical English conceit," he said softly. " 'Twas in ma mind maybe I cherrished too harrd feelin's towarrd ye, but from this minute I ha' only pleasure in the contemplation o' your fate. Thank yourself for it."

"But you mustn't talk to me like that," almost sobbed the Hon. Herbert. "It isn't right, you know. Why, it isn't done. Really, I assure you, you have quite the wrong conception of your duties. Laying aside all question of class, and quite as man to man——"

"Bill Tibbotts' son talkin' o' class an' class," muttered McConaughy, with a shake of his head. "Young man, ye ha' much to learrn—more than I ha' time to teach ye at this time. Come wi' me."

Still with an efficient grip on the Hon. Herbert's dripping shoulder, he led him toward the cabin-companionway, despite the protests and feeble physical opposition offered to their progress.

"Bide, bide," urged McConaughy, when temper flared in childish resentment. "Ye'll mak' a spectacle o' yourrself beforre the men. Think o' class an' class, laddie. 'Twould never do, never. Gently, now." They gained the stairs. "Here's your cabin. Now, in ye go." A dexterous push, and the Hon. Herbert landed in his berth. "Become a shaderr o' a man, laddie. That's ma counsel. Learrn humeelity an' seamanship. Ye ha' farr to go."

And McConaughy shut the door.

"—— you," cried the Hon. Herbert, turning over in the bunk as the door slammed. "I don't like you. I say you know, really, I despise you. You have annoyed me—fearfully!"

A chuckle was audible from outside.

"I shall tell my father, most certainly," threatened the Hon. Herbert, tears welling into his pale eyes.

"In good time, ma lad, in good time," the mocking voice returned. "An' 'twill be verra good time, I'll assurre ye."

On deck again, McConaughy drew a long breath of the clean salt air. Mr. Grant received him with an appreciative grin as he ascended the bridge-ladder.

"Guid worrk, sirr," said the first officer. "Ye ha' savit us a' trouble by grapplin' wi' the gomeril at the starrt-off o' things. When he comes to, he'll ken his poseetion i' the worrld."

"Ay," said McConaughy, "he should ha', a more properr appreeciation o' the evil o' bein' borrn English. But I'll say frankly, Mr. Grant, I wouldna ha' the handlin' o' him for any length o' time for his fatherr's interest in the Claragh Line."

Early in the afternoon they sighted the now lanternless tower of Skerryvore, breaking the endless sea-line to port. To starboard the mass of Ben Hynish loomed up on the misty coast of Tiree, and they entered the great gulf which separates Skye and the lesser islands of the Scottish coast from the Outer Hebrides.

To Jock these dangerous waters were old-time memories of his youth, and he made nothing of piloting the *Saucy Mona* in darkness through the narrow gut of the Little Minch and on by starlight through the North Minch, dodging the shoals of Shiant Bank. They rounded Cape Wrath before dawn, and morning found them well to the north of Scotland. A submarine-chaser of the motor-patrol, a craft close akin to their own, raced up to demand identification, and then they bore on for the Orkneys. Late that afternoon the British guardships passed them through the Pentland firth, where submarine nettings stretched in zig-zag lines toward the lair of Britain's mighty battle-fleet.

Here McConaughy tarried no longer than he had to. He was afraid that he might be pestered by some new orders from the Admiralty, and he wished to make use of the dark hours ahead to slip through the North Sea, without being seen by any chance German patrols and gain the shoal waters in the neighborhood of the dangerous Horn Reef or Great Jutland Bank, where he might feel reasonably safe from hostile curiosity and any force except the God of

Storms. Against this last contingency, he was particularly careful to secure all the information possible from every ship they met on their way through the Firth as to the prevailing winds in the North Sea. All agreed that the past week had been particularly nasty and that it was reasonable to anticipate calmer weather.

"We maun juist trust i' Providence, that's a'," said Jock piously, when they had cleared finally on the last leg of their run to the enemy's coast.

"Ay, an' in such seamanship as we can boast," replied his captain. "If Providence sends a wrrong wind whilst we're under the Bank—'twill tak' more norr the enerrgies o' Providence to save us."

THEY ran all night, eighteen to twenty knots, no lights—for that is the custom of the North Sea in war time—and double lookouts. At each of the machine guns stood muffled crews, belts ready fixed in the hoppers. The weather turned a trifle cold toward midnight, but the sky was hard and frosted with a million stars. Clearer going they could not have asked for. And if they were visible in the starshine to an enemy, no less would an enemy have been visible to them. Not even a periscope could have escaped detection under the cold blue light.

But not once did they sight anybody, for they were out of the track of such scant commerce as ventured in those narrow, mine-infested, submarine-ridden waters; and the war-craft of both fleets kept more to the southward. In fact, there was no reason for any vessel to follow the *Saucy Mona's* course, which led smack against the Horn Reef and the vast expanse of shoals and sand-banks that stretched south from it along the northern strip of Germany's coast, forming a far better defense for its inhabitants than countless armored fortresses and guns.

McConaughy snatched a brief nap in the tiny cabin behind the pilot-house, leaving orders that he be awakened at four. He came on the bridge ten minutes after that hour to greet the first level rays of the sun pushing over the horizon. The wind was blowing down from the north, biting and keen. The ordinarily tempestuous floor of the North Sea was comparatively smooth, and the engines of the *Saucy Mona* were thrusting her along at twenty-five knots.

After his first mechanical survey of sky and waters, McConaughy turned to the chart and figured out their position.

"There used to be a lightship eight miles south of the reef," he remarked to Grant. "Bid the lookouts watch for it. But maybe she'll not be there any more, so we will no rely on it for a landfall. We ha' a good way to go yet, and I'll shoot the sun at noon. By then we'll ken more than we do now."

That morning they hoisted the imperial German naval ensign, for as McConaughy said, there was slim chance of their encountering Allied warships and more than a little risk of running into a stray German destroyer—in which latter case their only hope would be to elude conversation or get into shoal water where the enemy could not follow or else make the Danish coast.

At noon McConaughy verified their position. The course was true, but as he had half expected, the Horn Reef Lightship had been removed. They passed over her former anchorage, and a few minutes later spied the oily rollers that marked the outer edge of the great sands. Here they turned east and bore off on a course toward Skallingen on the Jutland coast. McConaughy kept a man in the bow with the lead going, and found, as the charts were marked, a depth of sixty feet close in the lee of the reef.

Bearing in mind his instructions to look for mines, he spent the remainder of the afternoon switching back and forth across the waters south of the reef, a heavy trawling-net overside. Once or twice they raised the dingy sails of a Danish fishing-boat, but the Danes fled with ludicrous fear at first sight of the dreaded ensign flapping at the *Saucy Mona's* stern. It was evident that the German patrols did not encourage the intimacy of neutral shipping.

Darkness fell without a single mine to their credit, and the ocean about them tumbled open and gray. Warily, then, McConaughy steered a course to the southeast, giving the dangerous sands wide sea-room. Through the early hours of the night they pounded well down to the southward, never an adventure to relieve the monotony of tireless watching, and at midnight turned northward again. An hour before the glow of the false dawn, they raised the Nordly light on their port bow, and presently, straight ahead, the tower

of Blaavands Huk shot its lacey beam athwart their path.

"It doesna look bad to see a lighted coast again," McConaughy said to Jock.

"Ay, it gie's a body a sonsy warrm feelin' i' the hearrt o' him," Jock agreed. "I hae mair use for the Danes than e'er before."

The *Mona* stormed in close enough to get a brief look at Skallingen roadstead. A few fishing-craft and a brace of rusty little coasting steamers were the only occupants.

"No submarrines there," commented McConaughy, as they ran out to sea once more, ignoring with true German naval insolence the questioning signals flown from the coast-guard station on the nearest headland.

"Aweel," said Jock, "an' what's tae be done noo?"

"We'll ha' a bit look at some o' they sma' islands to the south o' us. 'Twill tak' the balance o' the day, an' at night——"

He winked solemnly at Jock, and for some reason Jock found this amazingly funny.

"We wull hae seen nothin' o' the laddie syne ye gied him his cabin orrderrs," he suggested suddenly. "Wad ye not——"

"Ay," assented McConaughy, "bring him out. He should ha' his sea legs by now."

Hugely pleased, Jock descended upon this errand, and McConaughy sent a quartermaster in search of Apgar. Evan appeared buttoning his jacket and endeavoring to conceal the grease on his fingers.

"Hecht, Evan man, I ha' scarrce seen ye since we came on boarrd," remarked his skipper. "I mind ye told me, too, there was no grease i' the engine-room below. Where ha' ye been?"

"T'e engineer pelow is an haartificer after me own heaart," responded Evan shamefacedly. "We hafe peen consultin' o' t'e mysteries o' t'e profession."

He burst into fiery enthusiasm:

"Maan Skipperr, I hafe nefer seen such power as t'ose wee peauties o' his caan defise. Wi' nefer a rumple an' no more noise t'an a sewin'-machine t'ey trive us t'irrty knots. 'Tis marfelous. I hafe peen learrnin' t'eir ways."

"Well, there will be no harrm done, but from now, Evan, d'ye see, I must ha' ye at ma orrdherrs. So ye'll forrego the engine-room an' stand by me here."

"Ay," said Evan willingly enough. "An' to we fight, t'en?"

"I canna tell. Just bide your time, an' ye'll ken as much as maself."

Jock ascended the bridge-ladder with a puzzled look on his face. He jerked one thumb over his shoulder.

"He wull be——"

But before the words were out of his mouth the Hon. Herbert stepped after him. He was a vastly different figure from the wobegone youth who had collapsed in the scuppers. Clad in uniform, clean-shaven, immaculate, he sauntered up to McConaughy with his old, off-hand manner.

"Ha, Captain McHoneybee—got the name right that time, old top, what?—this is better than the last time we met. I was feelin' rather off the other day, not a bit fit, you know. Afraid I may have ragged you some, what? But don't let it worry you. I'm that way sometimes, when my temper's up. Never mean a thing I say. *Mal de mer* and all that sort of thing, you know. Well, how is the old ark goin'? Did the governor do you right?"

"By the powerr o' the Presbyterry," swore McConaughy with unaccustomed vehemence.

Then his face wrinkled in the suspicion of a smile.

"Tak' no more thought o' it, Mistherr Tibbotts," he said smoothly. "'Tis a mattherr o' no imporrtance. I trrust ye slept well the past day?"

Jock and Evan gaped. But the Hon. Herbert merely smiled with easy, condescending good-nature.

"Thanks, old chap," he replied. "Yes, I had a deuced good nap last night, though the goin' was rather poor yesterday. You seem to have picked out an easier track for the day's run, what?"—He laughed in a high-pitched tenor—"I say, rather good that, eh? Rather good, if I do say it myself."

And horror of horrors, he slapped McConaughy on the back. Jock and Evan gasped openly, expecting to see the rash youth hurled into the sea. But McConaughy only smiled again, a trifle constrainedly this time, it is true.

"Ye ha' a grrand conception o' humorr, young man," he said. "I canna mind I e'er hearrd a man crack so mony jokes as ye do in a day's time. Ye must ha' a noble intellect."

The Hon. Herbert looked puzzled.

"Intellect? Intellect?" he repeated.

"That's a new one on me. I've been told a good many things, you know, but never—I say, I believe you are spoofing me. I do, really, old top. Quite good, too, by Gad. Quite good! Haw, haw, haw!"

He called upon Jock and Evan to join him.

"A great jokester, the old boy is, what? Ha, ha, ha. Never would have believed it of him. D'ye see the point? Inellect. Rummy good stuff!"

Evan saw the veins swelling on McConaughy's forehead, sensed the need of relief and leaped into the breach.

"T'e aft machine gun 'as tropped a polt," he remarked. "Caan ye help me to fix it? We hafe peen waitin' for ye this 'our past."

"Right you are, Taffy," assented the Hon. Herbert. "Be with you in a jiffy. I say,"—he turned again to McConaughy—"where are we, Skipper?"

McConaughy choked a moment.

"I' the Norrth Sea," he announced thickly, after an effort.

"The North Sea? That's definite, what? Well, I'll take a squint at the chart by-an'-by. Come along, Taffy."

As he left the bridge, McConaughy looked at Jock, and Jock looked at McConaughy.

"Puir Evan," said Jock.

"Poorr Tibbotts, ye might bettherr say," rejoined McConaughy with asperity. "But there's no sympathy in ma hearrt for him this day."

"Skipper," said Jock seriously, "dinna ye see the unmistak'able worrkin's o' Prrovidence i' the shapin' o' the laddie's doom? He's gey ripe to sufferr misforrtune an' miserry."

"Weell," said McConaughy dryly, "ye might as well call it Providence as aught else, Jock. But I'll say this, wi'out any intention o' irreverrence—if 'twere not Prrovidence lookin' out for the loon, I'd be sorre tempted to interrvene maself."

At which cryptic remark, Jock again found cause for laughter.

FROM Skallingen it is only some thirty miles into German waters. A number of small islands, little more than sand-spits, dot the adjoining coasts of Jutland and Schleswig-Holstein. McConaughy found a good berth between two of these islets, well within the Danish sphere of influence and out of sight from the open sea, anchored the *Mona*, and then set out in a small motor-dory to explore the neighboring archipelago.

Twice they met Danish fishermen in front of huts on shallow beaches, and one of these men, who spoke a little English, assured them that the German submarines had never come here—a fact McConaughy was already convinced of by reason of the shallow water. Indeed, the fishermen said they had never seen a warship of any kind in the vicinity. Often they heard the echoes of firing to the southwest, far out in the North Sea, but otherwise the war meant nothing to them. They were as remote from it, as if they lived on the opposite side of the Atlantic.

By dusk, McConaughy was back on board the *Saucy Mona*, and summoned a council of war. It was arranged that they should start before midnight, make a quick run down to a point off the Island of Röm, and then land a party in the dory to spy out the shore defenses and pick up what information they could.

"We'll mount a machine gun i' the dorry's bow," said McConaughy to the Hon. Herbert. "That will be your job, and 'twill keep ye busy the rest o' the evenin'—thank the Lorrd," he added under his breath.

But Evan accosted his skipper not long afterward, with a fiery face and ruddy eye.

"W'aat to ye mean, gifin' t'at itiot-fool t'e right to wreck a goot machine?" he demanded. "To ye t'ink t'e machine gun would pe any use whateffer if I let 'im tismantle it? For efery polt an' screw he 'as touchet I hafe 'at to put on four to make goot t'e tamage. Caall him off."

"I ken well your trrouble, Evan," said McConaughy soothingly, "an' I wouldna ha' ye let the young man wrreck the gun. But I must give him something to do against the night's worrk. Bearr wi' him, 'Twill not be for long."

Evan retired muttering Welsh profanities.

Midnight saw the *Mona* racing south, with a bone in her teeth, and every light hooded. Her crew stood in groups about the decks, each man equipped with a rifle, an automatic pistol and an electric flashlight. The Danish Island of Fano slipped by to port, and they veered farther out to sea. At a point off Sönderho, the southernmost Danish town, where the water shoals rapidly, they altered the course again.

When they dropped anchor at one o'clock they were eight miles off shore, with twenty feet of water under them.

Silently, one by one, fifteen men entered the dory—McConaughy, Jock, Evan, the Hon. Herbert and eleven of the crew. Lord Claragh's engineer was left in charge of the *Mona*, with orders to show a light, when the dory flashed a green lantern twice. This was to guide the landing party back to their ship.

The wind was blowing off shore, and for the first five miles McConaughy ran under power. Then he shut off the motor, and they took to the cars. It was two, when they sighted the white sands of the beach of Röm through a ragged gray blanket of North Sea mist.

Without a sound, save the easy crunching of the gravel under its keel, the dory ran up on the beach, and the landing party leaped out into the shallow water. One man was delegated to stay by the boat, the rest followed McConaughy through the sand-dunes that came close to the surf-line. When they were safe amongst the marsh-grass he halted them.

"Mr. Grant an' maself will go for'arrd," he said. "The rest o' ye will bide here until we give the worrd to advance. Mak' no noise."

"But, I say, Captain," interrupted the Hon. Herbert, "surely you are not goin' to do a chap out of his fun, are you? My governor was most particularly anxious that I should be in this thing, you know. Really, I think——"

"Ye'll see all the life ye can digest before the night's done," McConaughy reassured him grimly. "Stay here wi' the otherrs."

The Hon. Herbert shrank back into the group and said no more. There was an edge to McConaughy's voice that—well, other men than the Hon. Herbert, with far more will-power, had bowed to it.

After a brief word with Evan, who was to command the party, McConaughy and Jock stole off through a gulley between the dunes in a southerly direction parallel with the coast-line. As they climbed higher, they found the mist thinner. They walked for some twenty minutes before McConaughy saw what he was after. On top of a sand-ridge to their left, well above the water-line, loomed a dark, irregular succession of quadrangular shapes, masked in marsh-grass and stunted trees and bushes. Away off to one side stood a heavy, squat tower of steel, with a quaint conical cap like a candle-extinguisher. McConaughy nudged Jock in the ribs.

"That will be a battherry," he whispered.

"Sma' guns, though," amended Jock. "D'ye see the size o' the pits, noo, skipper? Four-incherrs, maybe, or fives."

"Ay. They wouldna ha' big ones here, for big ships canna get in. We ken that."

"There maun be sentries or pickets. Where wad——"

A clash of arms in the bushes above them cut the whisper from Jock's lips. Looking closer they made out dimly the bulk of a black-and-white striped sentry-box, with a small clump of pine-trees growing between it and the sea. Jock held his breath, but the sentry only shifted his rifle, moved about restlessly and then apparently resumed his nap or whatever he had been disturbed in.

"Do we scrag him?" hissed Jock.

McConaughy pondered the suggestion.

"No," he said at last. "I want a prisoner to tak' back wi' me—parrt forr the inforrmation, parrt as recompense—" he grinned, but Jock could not see his face in the darkness— "for the losses we may sufferr. If we scrag him now we may mak' a noise an' give the job away ahead o' time. We'll wait an' tak' him when the otherrs are up."

They crawled off cautiously along the way they had come, and after putting a few dunes between themselves and the sentry, broke into a run. A low challenge warned them they were approaching their friends, and McConaughy answered reassuringly.

"Come wi' me," he said, without giving the Hon. Herbert a chance to ask questions. "There's no time to be lost. Be carefu' how ye step, though. I'll brain the man that stumbles."

It required more time for the larger party to gain the foot of the dune whereon the sentry was perched. Here McConaughy left them again, and taking only Jock with him, circled the dune in order to come up on the other side. They crawled on their hands and knees through marsh-grass to the edge of the clump of trees.

The sentry was standing in the entrance to the sentry-box, one hand holding his rifle, the other rubbing the sleep from his eyes. He was a thick-set, bearded

Landsturm man, who probably found such lonesome work not at all to his fancy and was thinking more about the wife and kinder in some Friesian town than his present duties.

McConaughy and Jock popped up before him like two Jacks-in-the-box. McConaughy relieved him of his rifle with one hand, laying it dexterously on the grass, and with the other encircled his ankles in an iron grasp. Jock seized him around the shoulders and pressed a mammoth paw across his mouth, pending application of the gag that was ready in the Scotchman's pocket. The two of them had the poor man trussed and helpless before his dazed wits comprehended the situation.

A hiss from McConaughy brought the rest of the party to their side. He told off two men to escort the prisoner back to the dory, then they pressed on, heading this time inland, toward the rear of the fortifications and the barracks of the garrison. As they advanced, the scrub growth grew heavier, but they followed a well defined path which fifteen minutes later debouched between two dunes upon a narrow valley in the sand-hills. Shacks, houses and tents lined its bottom. Close to them was an ammunition dump, boxes of shells cloaked in tarpaulins and covered loosely with boards. Lights gleamed in one building, which McConaughy took to be the guard-house. He summoned Jock and Evan to his side and discoursed briefly his plan.

"Rememberr, Evan," he concluded, "ye will waste no time about your retreat. Jock an' I will tak' care o' the raid worrk. Two men will be enough for ye, the rest will come wi' us."

THEY split up, Evan approaching the ammunition-dump, McConaughy and the others advancing at a trot upon the guard-house, their feet making no sound in the soft sands. Outside this building McConaughy halted again. He looked in at a window. Half-a-dozen soldiers sat or lay about a wood-stove—a sergeant scratched at a heap of papers at a desk. McConaughy turned to his party.

"Smarrtly, men," he ordered. "Rifles at the ready, shoot any man that raises a hand. Now!"

He threw open the door and his men filed in after him. Their rifles covered the bewildered Germans, some of whom were scarce awake.

"Ye are prisonerrs," said McConaughy calmly. "I ha' taken the forrt." He walked up to the sergeant. "Where is the commanderr?"

The sergeant stared at him blankly.

"The commanderr?" repeated McConaughy impatiently. "C o m m a n d e r r ? Command-err?"

The man pointed dumbly out of the door. A glance over his shoulder showed McConaughy that the sergeant indicated a building more pretentious than any of the others which stood nearly opposite.

"Guarrd these men," he told Jock. "Tak' what paperrs ye find in yon desk."

He motioned for two of his crew to follow him and ran across the street. The door of the house was unlocked and he stepped into a dark hall, flashing his electric light about him. A door to one side looked inviting and McConaughy opened it. On a camp-bed was stretched a sleeping man. The dazzling light awakened him and he sat up, rubbing his eyes, just like the yawning privates across the way.

"Wo ist das?" he asked.

McConaughy's answer was to motion to his men to pinion the officer. The struggle that followed was short and bitter. The German gave one cry of surprise, then was throttled into submission and bound with his own bedclothes.

"Tak' him back to the dorry, ye two," McConaughy ordered his men. "Stay, though. I wouldna send ma worrst enemy onto the sea a raw night like this i' his bedclothes. Here's his uniform. He can ha' it when he gets on boarrd. Quick, men."

As the German was escorted from the room, McConaughy forced the lock of a field-desk, stuffing papers, maps and plans into his pockets as fast as possible. A ticking watch on the desk said three, and he knew his time was scant. Drawer after drawer he smashed open with the butt of his automatic.

He was searching for more documentary loot when the sound of a shot startled him. A glance proved that it came from the guard-house.

McConaughy fairly hurled himself through the door. He found a scene of hubbub and confusion and in one corner of the guard-room the body of the sergeant. Jock and his men were occupied in clubbing

the Germans with the butts of their rifles.

"Peace," roared McConaughy, and his personality worked its will even upon the sullen prisoners. "What's this?"

He pointed to the sergeant.

"The auld de'il wadna be quiet," said Jock angrily. "Some o' the prisonerrs began tae shuffle their feet an' I went amang them tae stop it, an' the next thing I kenned he was lowpin' for the door. I shot him. There was naught else tae do."

"Where's Tibbotts?"

"Here," said a meek voice in the farthest corner. The Hon. Herbert looked downcast. "Don't you think you ought to be getting out of here, Captain McHoneybee?" he urged. "It's rather dangerous, you know. I'm sure my governor——"

McConaughy cut him short.

"Look out for the —— fool," he said to Jock. "Get away, ma men. Mr. Apgar will be blowin' up the ammuneetion i'——"

A deafening roar cut him short. It was followed by an indescribable hurtling, crackling, whistling din, as tons of separate projectiles began to detonate. Shrapnel pellets shrieked around them. A fragment of the casing of a five-inch shell smashed through one corner of the guard-house.

"Run!" screamed McConaughy. "Aftherr me, men! Bearr away from the path we came."

He led the way, and his men streamed after him, Jock and the Hon. Herbert bringing up the rear. As they ran down the street of tents and barracks, German soldiers commenced to pour out. At first the little file of running men was not noticed in the confusion. Then the prisoners of the guard-house joined their comrades, and rifles began to crack through the storm of the blazing ammunition-dump and bullets flicked the heels of the *Mona's* crew.

McConaughy dropped back to the rear, urging every man who passed him to make rapid progress for the beach. Jock caught up with him at the first gulley between the dunes. The first officer was swearing vigorously and dragging the limp form of the Hon. Herbert by one shoulder.

"Will the lad be shot?" asked McConaughy in some alarm.

"Shot? I could wish he was," snorted Jock. "He'll be nae mair nor funked wi' the fear o' death."

"Hecht," grunted McConaughy contemptuously, pausing to raise his rifle and sprinkle a clip of cartridges over the leaders of their pursuers faintly seen in the mist-shot darkness.

"Ha' we gaed farr enough?"

"Ay. Drrop him. We'll stand here."

Jock deposited his burden and sank down beside McConaughy in the sand, cuddling his rifle to his cheek and making every shot tell in the crowd that swarmed over the dunes on their trail.

"Wh-why d-don't you g-go on?" chattered the Hon. Herbert miserably. "I d-don't think my governor would like this. Really, I don't."

"All right," said McConaughy. "Jock, they'll be checked. Come on."

Jock motioned toward their companion.

"Nonsense," said McConaughy. "He'll be a grrown man. He'd scorrn your aid. Come wi' us, Mistherr Tibbotts."

The Hon. Herbert trotted after them, but soon they lost sight of him in the gloom. Then a wail reached their ears.

"Wait, please wait. I've tripped over a root. Please wait!"

"Come yourr ways, laddie," called Jock cheerfully.

"But wait for me."

"Ay, just follow on," McConaughy reassured him.

They heard another cry indistinctly, and then a party of Germans who had worked around to flank them opened fire, disclosing the intended trap, and McConaughy and Jock flew for their lives. It was close, too close for comfort. They dodged out of a gulley and into another, that a hasty glance at McConaughy's compass showed should lead to the sea, and as they ran they could hear the shouts of pursuers in a gulley parallel to theirs.

"Lord send——" panted McConaughy.

"Oh, Captain. Captain McHoneybee!" The wail was very faint. "They're all around——"

A chorus of Teutonic yelps cut off the rest.

"Nae shots," grunted Jock as he ran. "He'll be safe i' body, but unco sorre i' mind. What were ye sayin', Skipperr."

"I'm no as—young as—I was," replied McConaughy, breathing hard. "I was—sayin' I hope Evan will ha' the—machine gun—ready. Ah. Here's the beach."

They burst out upon the open sands. The dory, shoved off and with her nose pointed out to sea, was lying in water deep enough to float her, all the party aboard.

"Turrn loose on the dunes," cried McConaughy. "We're spent."

As he and Jock staggered through the water and were helped inboard by eager hands, the machine gun drummed a warning to the first Germans that swarmed across the seaward dunes, and every man who was not busy doing something else took up the tune with his rifle.

For the next few minutes McConaughy and Jock lay in the bottom of the dory and pumped their lungs full of glorious, salt-laden air. The racket of the machine gun and the tearing clatter of the rifles meant nothing to them. It was McConaughy who recovered first.

"Evan," he called.

The chief engineer abandoned the machine gun to an assistant and crawled across the thwarts to him.

"Ha' ye lost any men?"

"No. Two wountid—not enough to count at all, whateffer. Put, naame o' John Wesley, skipperr, ye hafe ploot on your coat!"

Evan stooped quickly and ran his fingers along McConaughy's shoulder. McConaughy winced involuntarily, and Evan stripped the coat open.

"Ay," exclaimed the Welshman. "Ye hafe a pullet t'rough t'e shoulter."

"I ha' neverr felt it to this minute. 'Tis ma firrst wound, Evan."

"Got pe praiset we hafe ye safe," rejoined Evan fiercely.

A chorus of amens echoed from the crew, who abandoned machine gun and engine to cluster around their skipper.

" 'This nought," asserted McConaughy. "Back to work, all o' ye."

"Put firrst we shoult hafe a wee prayer," objected Evan. "We hafe peen teliveret out of greaat taanger—an' yourself not the least."

"Ay," agreed McConaughy. "I ha' appreeciation o' divine merrcy. We'll, pray, Evan."

And with the German bullets at long range still plunking in the water around them, the motor thumping in their midst, Evan delivered himself of a prayer after his own heart, aggressively humble as to themselves and trenchantly bitter with venom towards their enemies.

But he had scarce got the last amen out of his lips when he whirled around upon McConaughy again.

"Saaint Taavit!" he cried. "T'e natural! Tit ye foist him on t'e Germans?"

McConaughy grinned with pleasureable recollection and winked at Jock.

"Ay, Evan. Poor lad. He covered the rearr o' ye to the last. We did what we could do prrotect him. If I do say it, maself"—Jock chuckled at this— "we were heroes, between us. Obsarrve ma wound in proof. But he lingerred too long, Evan. An' that's the long an' the shorrt o' it. The Gerrmans took him, an' he'll spend the next yearr or two o' his promisin' young life scratchin' lice an' learrnin' the virrtues o' poverrty. God be prraised!"

"Amen, again," said Evan.

"The young leddy——" Jock began. McConaughy cut him short.

"The young leddy will neverr be mentioned in connection wi' the incident," he commanded. "Rememberr that, the two o' ye. 'Twas the forrtune o' war. I willna call it the misforrtune."

"Tit ye"— Evan lowered his voice, at once discreetly and significantly.

"I did not, I'm thankfu' to say. I was rready to trrip him at need or bind him an' hand him overr to the Gerrmans; but mattherrs worrked out betther than I dared hope for. The laddie lost himself. Hecht, I thought from the starrt all we would need to do would be leave him by his lone i' the darrk. I was right.

Evan looked suspicious.

"Put your wount?"

"Just plain heavenly luck, Evan man. If I was you I wouldna be jealous o' the gifts o' Prrovidence."

Evan shook his head doubtfully.

"Ye're a paat maan when crosset, put I woult not put it py ye, if ye wanted the effect——"

"Would ye imply self-desthrruction?" roared McConaughy.

"Well," said Evan unabashed, "t'e wount is clean t'rough t'e flesh an' nigh painless. It coult not hafe peen neater tone—could it, Jock?"

Obviously startled, Jock started to reply, when McConaughy interrupted.

"Jock kens naething about it. Do ye, Jock?"

"Nae, nae. 'Twas——"

"Ye ken nothing, Jock."

"Ay, Skipperr."

Evan spat over-side with an expressiveness beyond words.

"AND how is the shoulder?" asked Miss McNish.

"Fine, ma'am," returned McConaughy. "An' yourrself?"

She smiled radiantly.

"I don't know why it is, Captain McConaughy, but I feel better than I have in a long time. It—it seems strangely as though I had gotten some weight off my mind."

McConaughy blinked shrewdly.

"Might it not be ye ha' rid yourrself o' the burrden o' contemplatin' enforrced matrimony?" he asked.

Miss McNish walked over to the window of her office without replying. McConaughy, after a sly glance at her back, began to flick through the pages of the manifest of the *Elizabeth Barrett.*

"Captain McConaughy," she said abruptly.

He looked up.

"I have a confession to make."

"Ay?"

She hesitated.

"The plain truth," she said desperately, "is that I'm not a bit sorry poor Herbert Tibbotts was captured. I'm glad. Yes, glad. I find myself hoping that the war will last for years."

"About that last ye need not fash yourself, ma'am," remarked McConaughy dryly. "The prresent state o' mind o' the English an' the bunglin' o' their leaderrs is a sure guarantee ye will not be botherred by the young man this mony a yearr."

"But I ought not to feel this way. It's —it's rotten."

"I wouldna say so," he replied judiciously. "It's ma soberr judgement 'twas for the best o' a' concerrned."

"How?"

"Well, you wouldna dispute ma obserrvation so far as yourself is concerrned?"

"No, indeed."

"As for the young man, well, ma'am, he was an uncommon worrthless spoiled prroduct o' sodden riches. It may well be this experrience will be the makin' o' him. At the long worrst, it couldna do him harrm."

"Perhaps," she agreed. "But his father? Poor old Lord Claragh feels it bitterly. By the way, here is a letter from him that partly concerns you."

She recrossed the room to the desk and tossed over to him several typewritten sheets.

Without answering her last objection, McConaughy began to peruse them. He read:

Dear Tabitha:

As you can readily understand, the news which came almost simultaneously from you and the Admiralty has wellnigh prostrated me. People refuse to believe it, but I am growing old. Herbert was all I had, as you know, and now I must think of him wasting some of the best years of his life in a German prison-camp. I at once took up with the Premier the question of securing a special exchange, but I am told that there has been so much scandal about previous exchanges of this character, the Ministry have put a stop to them altogether. However, I was able to secure intelligence through the American Ambassador at Berlin that Herbert was well and none the worse for his heroic deeds.

In fact, my dear Tabitha, the one consolation which I have is the thought of Herbert's dauntless courage and self-sacrifice. Perhaps you have heard that he has been gazetted at the Admiralty for the War Cross. Some of my friends say that he should have had the Victoria Cross, and I dare say if I had subscribed, as I was asked, to the last Liberal fund, it would have been arranged.

But I take pleasure in thinking that after all Herbert won his decoration without family influence or pressure of any kind, simply by his own splendid devotion to duty. Captain McConaughy's report of the way in which Herbert covered the landing-party's retreat, has been read by many of my friends, and I hear, is receiving some circulation in the daily press. It must afford you, too, my dear, satisfaction to know that your childhood playmate has raised himself to such high esteem.

McConaughy stopped at the bottom of the first page.

"It proves ma p'int," he said, tapping the paper. "The old lorrd is no less pleased wi' mattherrs than yourself. If his son had come back he wouldna ha' got the Cross an' been called a hero. Claragh would ha' been pleased, 'this thrue, but he wouldna ha' gained the satisfaction he knows today."

Miss McNish pondered this for a moment.

"Yes," she assented at last, "I fancy you are right. But go on. You haven't read the last page yet."

Silently, McConaughy complied.

For Captain McConaughy's share in the enterprise I entertain the most profound gratitude, both to you and to him. I wonder if I might have your permission to approach him with a proposition which has been approved by our directors. I need scarcely say that I shall remain silent concerning it if you do not care to approve of my suggestion. We have been feeling for some time the need of a technical seaman on the board to assist me in the executive control of the line. I need scarcely say that the salary would be commensurate with the responsibility entailed, and while I do not desire to seem to reflect upon the Red Funnel Line, which your dear father built up so nobly, still, it is unquestioned that the Claragh Line is the larger of

the two; and Captain McConaughy would enjoy with us a correspondingly greater opportunity. Please let me know at your convenience if I may communicate with him on the subject.

McConaughy pushed the letter on one side and picked up the manifest of the *Elizabeth Barrett.*

"Well?" said Miss McNish.

"Well," said McConaughy, "I'll be takin' out the *Elizabeth Barrrrett* next week Thursday."

"But, Captain McConaughy," she said eagerly, "I haven't the slightest objection to your going to the Claragh Line. Indeed, I think you owe it to yourself."

McConaughy put down the manifest again and looked at her severely.

"Ma'am," he said, "d'ye think that Miles McConaughy would ever worrk for an Englishman, be he low or high, when there's good men o' Ulsterr will appreeciate his worrth? I ha' no intention o' leavin' your employ—unless ye wish me to."

"Wish you to?" she cried. "Never. And for what you have said, if for nothing else, you shall have a seat on our board just as soon as I can call a meeting to arrange it. Oh, how I shall enjoy writing Lord Claragh that you would rather hold a half-size position with the Red Funnel fleet than be a giant of shipping interests in the Claragh Line."

"An' while ye are aboot it," counseled McConaughy, "ye might drrop him worrd that ye ha' given overr thoughts o' matrimony wi' that—that long-sided, thick-headed, hairy-faced, gingerr-haired gomeril he ca's his son!"

"Why, I never knew you felt that way about him!" exclaimed Miss McNish.

"He ca'ed me McHoneybee," said McConaughy simply.

"Well, he has had his deserts," she laughed.

"Ay," said McConaughy, and there was a twinkle in his eye.

A Little Song That He Knew

by Hapsburg Liebe

Author of "In Full of Account," "The Burning Light," etc.

AT AN up-stairs window in the big and rough boarding-house of the Baxter-Wayne Logging Company's camp on Crooked Creek, which is deep in the heart of Tennessee's hills, Ward Hanson sat as still as though he were frozen there. All but his eyes, that is. Now he looked toward the score or more of blue-shirted and booted, broad-hatted and corduroyed timber-jacks, his associates, at their usual Sunday afternoon play in the clearing around the boarding-house and the commissary and supplies building.

Now he looked soberly and expectantly

toward a small, green cedar that stood in the cabin yard of old Johnse Flowers, at the head of a little cove a quarter of a mile to the eastward. For half an hour his gaze alternated between the playing loggers and the green cedar, then he became impatient, took up an old brown fiddle from his nearby bed and thumbed the strings to see whether they were in tune.

But another glance through the window showed him that a white cloth had been placed on the cedar. He smiled and put the instrument down, rose and went down-stairs still smiling. The white cloth was the signal of his sweetheart. By it he knew that Sadie was on her way to their meeting-place on the creek below the camp. Sadie was to give him an answer that afternoon.

Hanson did not mean to let his eagerness betray anything, so he moved very leisurely when he had set foot on the ground. He was not permitted to cross the clearing unmolested—"Rush" Gudridge, bully and champion-fighter of every logging-camp for miles and miles around, caught him by an arm and bantered him for a boxing-bout.

"Go off," growled Hanson. "You know I don't box with you, Rush."

For Gudridge was too big and too heavy, and Gudridge was the invincible, the unconquerable. He was a Goliath, and in his prime—he could throw a horse or a bull—with his bare hands he could twist the bark from a sapling, or tie iron rods in knots. Hanson himself was a well-nigh perfect physical man, and anything but a coward, but—well, Gudridge had proved over and over that he was the invincible, the unconquerable.

"I won't hit you hard," grinned the champion.

There had never been any manner of friendship between these two men, and Sadie Flowers, belle of her section, was one reason for that. Hanson jerked his arm roughly out of Gudridge's strong grip.

"You'd better not hit me at all," he warned.

"Mammyboy!" sneered Gudridge.

The other said nothing and went on across the clearing. The bully faced his brother, who stood watching, winked and inclined his great head toward his rival. Bill Gudridge understood. Five minutes later, he was stealthily following Hanson through the sea of white and waxen laurel bloom.

When Hanson reached the meeting-place in the woodland, the girl was there waiting for him. She was bare-footed, and her brown hair hung down her back in one thick plait. Her face was both pretty and sad, and a poorly-made and much-faded dress of calico could not altogether hide the graceful lines of her slender and roundish figure.

Hanson walked up to her, took both her hands in his, and looked straight into her soft, deep brown eyes. She shrank a little, and at that Hanson's cheeks paled somewhat.

"Tell it, Sadie," he blurted.

"For the present, it—it must be 'no' Wardlaw," said Sadie, turning her gaze toward her bare feet.

Close association with those who had been closely associated with Yankee lumbermen, logging-camp superintendents and woods foremen had taken away the broadest of her hill dialect.

Hanson noted absently that one of her big-toes was burrowing diffidently into the black leaf mold. After a moment, she went on:

"My daddy said if I was to marry one of you fiddlin' Hansons, he'd never even speak to me any more, Wardlaw. I couldn't bear that. You understand, Wardlaw, I've got only my daddy, and my daddy's got only me. I couldn't be separated from him for all the time."

"That old feud," clipped Hanson. "Sadie, do you know that the rest o' the world laughs at us mountain people for feudin'? And it is foolish. I'd sure been thinkin' the old feelin' was dead, Sadie."

"No," replied the girl, "it ain't dead. It won't be dead as long as pap lives. Your folks, maybe, has forgot it; but pap still remembers. And there's my cousin Nathan—he remembers too. He hates you, Wardlaw. But that's mostly because he wants to marry me. Rush Gudridge wants to marry me too—and pap wants me to marry Rush. But—we'll wait and hope, and see what the future's got for us. I reckon you'd better go, Wardlaw. I'm sorry."

Hanson pressed her hands gently and dropped them, turned and went back to the camp. And the eaves-dropper, stealing after him, went to Rush Gudridge and told.

Once in the big upstairs-room of the boarding-house, Hanson took up his fiddle and began to play as he rarely played.

Those who knew him best knew that something was wrong—he didn't play as though he wished to tear the very heart out of his fiddle when all was well with him. Soon every man of the other timber-jacks was standing or sitting here and there behind the troubled mountaineer. Hanson, knowing nothing ot it, fiddled on with a sort of merry desperation.

And nobody noticed a pale and slender and boyish-looking young man in cheap, rather loud attire that marked him as one from a different land, who stood in the doorway and listened with all his soul. Beside him set a dust-stained old traveling-bag stuffed almost to bursting with clothing and two pairs of worn but cherished, padded gloves. He had walked from Johnsville in the lowland that day, and now he frequently shifted his weight from one tired and aching foot to the other.

At the last, Hanson, as though in apology to his beloved instrument, played the air of an old and sad song, which contrasted oddly with such rollicking airs as "Buffalo Gals" and "Dream of the Devil." When he threw down the fiddle and faced about, the stranger went toward him smiling as though he had known him always.

"THAT last tune," said the stranger—and he seemed somehow out of breath—"that's a little song that I know. If I could sing like I used to sing, I'd sing it for you. Sing and fight, sing and fight, that was me in the good days. My name is Kid Minton, gentlemen. Maybe you've read of me in the sporting pages, eh? I'm from Memphis, Nashville, Chattanooga, New Orleans and Atlanta."

He halted at a point near Hanson, and there he stood looking up into Hanson's sober eyes with something very like adulation in his gaze. The queer attraction was mutual. For the moment the timber-jack forgot his worriment, he put a kindly hand on Kid Minton's shoulder.

"We'd like to hear you sing, buddy, if you felt like it," he said. "Yes, that tune is mighty pretty, though the words, it always seemed to me, is a little sickish like."

"Sickish?" questioned Minton, seriously. "Not when—you've been through with what I've been through. My mother used to sing that song—and it applied to her then the same as it applies to me now."

With that he sank wearily to one of the beds, and made as if to lie down.

It chanced to be Rush Gudridge's bed that he had chosen, and Gudridge, after the fashion of men of his kind, flew instantly angry.

"Here, you!" he snapped. "Out o' there!"

He seized Kid Minton by the back of his coat and flung him brutally to the floor, face downward and Minton lay there still. That which was almost a moan of disapproval ran through the crowd of timber-jacks. Wardlaw Hanson stepped toward the bully, his eyes were flashing like powderfire, and every muscle in his fine young body was tense and quivering. Kid Minton raised himself to an elbow and looked hard toward Gudridge, and the loggers saw the bright red of blood at the corners of Kid Minton's mouth.

"Beef! You're all—just plain meat—beef—your forehead—would split a .22 bullet!" came in a voice that was strong only in the spirit of it.

"You're a lowdown yellow dog, Gudridge!" cried Wardlaw Hanson. "Couldn't ye see the boy was sick. But what did you care. I know you're goin' to lick me, Gudridge, and——your soul, you've got to do it!"

He hurled himself upon that mountain of hard flesh and bone that the Crooked Creek country called champion. It was a high courage. Hanson, of the fiddling Hansons, dreamer and musician rather than fighter, was fighting for a principle and without even the faintest hope of winning.

Of course, it was short. Hanson was quickly defeated, just as he had known beforehand. When he came to himself, he was lying in the center of the floor, and a ring of silent and half angry loggers stood around and over him, and Kid Minton was kneeling beside him. Minton's voice was low and filled with anxiety:

"Bo, can't you hear me? Get up bo. Honest, I'm much obliged to you. I won't forget it, ever. You remember what I say to you—some day, somebody who carries in his pistol pocket the difference between his size and that big beef's size, is going to kill the beef. Now if these fellows will clear out and give you some air——"

He rose and pushed the ring open. The timber-jacks gave away to him, and soon they had dispersed altogether. Hanson

went to his feet stiffly and dazedly, went to his bed and sat down there. Minton took a cheap straight-backed chair close by.

Ten minutes of silence passed between them, and then Hanson raised his head and eyed the newcomer appraisingly.

"Here for your health, son?" he asked.

"Yeah, bugs," quickly.

Kid Minton liked to talk, though there were times when he lacked the breath necessary to do it.

"The bone-cutters," he continued, smiling wanly, "said it was all off with me. But I'll live longer up here than down there. I ain't got any folks at all, so it's all the same to me, where I live. I never did have any folks—but one, and now I ain't even got her. Bo, I sure hope you can understand, I can't talk any more about it. Say—it troubles me a good deal—do you think there's any sure-enough hereafter? I ask everybody that. I know it's better to believe there is than not to believe it, but do you think there *really is?*"

Hanson's answer came readily enough:

"Yes, buddy. For one reason, the world is made up nearly all of halfs o' things; so somewhere there must be the other halfs. And then there must ha' been somethin' to make everything. Besides that, all o' humanity worships somethin', whether it's an idol, the sun, or the livin' God. But I reckon that last is a half too, Kid."

The sick man's countenance lightened somewhat. This, to him, was better reasoning than the hammer-and-tongs and hell-fire-and-brimstone reasoning of the street preachers that he had heard.

When he spoke he changed the subject—

"I heard 'em talking, while you laid there on the floor. They said your girl had handed you a clean go-by. Honest, I'm sorry, Bo. I'll talk to the girl for you. I used to be some chinner with the ladies. I could make 'em believe the moon was a green cheese, or that big feet was a mark of superior intelligence."

Hanson frowned and lifted a hand in protest.

"All right," Minton hastily agreed. "Now listen. I've got a plan. By that plan, you're going to whip the beef. How? Bo, don't forget I'm the one and only Kid Minton, who used to be the champ lightweight o' the whole South. I know every trick o' the ring, and I'll teach 'em to you. See? I'll train you. Then you can put it all over the beef. Don't I know? Brains can lick meat any day. For the big guy's strength is all below his eyes. But you'll have to have a sparring pardner. Will you undertake it?"

Hanson was immediately interested. Five more minutes, and he had been completely won over to the little ex-pugilist's plan.

Minton was to take up quarters in an old and deserted cabin half a mile up the creek from the camp, and Hanson and his sparring partner were to go there each evening for training. When it was all arranged, Minton took up the brown fiddle and passed it to its owner.

"Play for me," he begged—"that little song that I know."

HANSON made Minton's cabin fairly comfortable with home-made furniture, and blankets and a lamp from the commissary. Also he furnished Minton with cooking utensils and a goodly supply of food from the commissary. The lessons began as soon as Hanson had picked from among the timber-jacks a good, tough man who disliked Rush Gudridge and who knew how to keep a secret tight, and Hanson plunged into the thing with his whole heart.

July and August and half of September passed, and the trees of the mountains began to take on their brilliant and beautiful autumnal attire. Hanson had trained hard and faithfully, and he had learned the generalship of the fighting game even more rapidly than his trainer had hoped for. A dozen times he had declared his readiness to match his strength and his skill against that of any man who walked with two feet on the face of the earth. But Kid Minton wanted to be doubly sure of victory, and he held Hanson back.

In spite of the pure and bracing air of the high altitude, the little ex-fighter's health had not improved. But he mentioned the matter only once, and that was on the evening before the day of the great fight—he pointed to a few brown and golden leaves that had drifted in at the door of his cabin, and said to the man who had become his best friend:

"Before they're done falling, my time will come. But it's all right. I ain't regretting anything."

His words brought a look of pain to Hanson's sunburned face. He continued, and he was still smiling:

"I've got to see that battle before I go—because," whimsically, "I sure won't have a chance to see it afterward. I've got a score against Gud, too, you know. I feel like it was me that was to fight him through you, Hansy. Well, I think you're ready now. So you might hand your challenge to Gud on tomorrow afternoon, with the battle to take place immediately. And listen—if I were you, I'd try to lay a certain queer kind of bet with old Johnse Flowers. Eh? Now remember these things especially, Hansy—you're to make Gud mad at the very first, so he'll lose the little head he's got. You're not to let him get his hands on you, and—I am to see the fight."

The next day was Sunday. Somewhere near the middle of the morning, Hanson saw that which he had not seen for more than two months, he saw a white cloth lying in a conspicuous place on the little cedar up in old Johnse Flowers' cabin yard. So Sadie wished to see him!

He threw down his fiddle and hastened by an indirect route to the meeting-place.

Sadie had been waiting for half an hour, and she was impatient. Hanson took both her hands in his. By the soft brown eyes of her, he knew that she had forgotten nothing during those long weeks just gone. Then she looked toward the ground, and then she leaned against him lightly and bashfully.

"What's the matter, Sadie?" he whispered.

"Everything and nothin'," aswered Sadie.

"You wanted to see me?"

"Yes, I wanted to see you, Wardlaw," she admitted very readily.

"Well—here I am."

Sadie remained silent. Then understanding dawned upon the timber-jack. She just wanted to see him again!

It made him very glad. He put an arm around her fine shoulders and kissed her.

"I'm goin' to lick Rush Gudridge clean out of his boots, Sadie," he said. "I wonder if it will make any difference with that drill-point steel daddy of yours?"

"Better let Rush alone," advised Sadie. "He'd kill you, Wardlaw. Leave it to Kid Minton."

"Kid Minton!" Hanson straightened and looked at her hard. "Why, honey, Kid Minton can't fight any more."

"Not that," said the girl. "I mean leave pap to Kid Minton. Didn't you know? Kid Minton, bless his heart, has been pleadin' your case to me and to pap for two months. Pleadin' to me to marry you without pap's pe'mission, and pleadin' to pap to let me marry you. And he's been talkin' the Bible and religion to pap, and—Wardlaw, pap's come to believe that the sun rises and sets in Kid Minton."

Hanson frowned, but the frown soon faded.

"Poor Kid," he said feelingly. "Sadie, I'm mighty slow to say I love a man, but I sure love Kid Minton. He's white to the bone. Let's go up to see your dad. I've got a sort of sportin' proposition I want to put up to him."

They went to the girl's home. On the honeysuckle-shaded front porch gaunt and bearded old Johnse Flowers sat poring over an illustrated Bible that Minton had found somewhere for him. Nearby sat Sadie's distant cousin, Nathan Flowers, and he was scowling—in no way was he like Sadie. Old Johnse looked up, saw the to him despised fiddling Hanson, and rose angrily.

"Wait a minute," said the timber-jack. "I've been believin' there was some real red, game blood in you. Am I right?"

"Shore, ye're right," snorted Old Johnse.

"Then I want to lay you a bet. I'll bet you the wages o' twenty years o' hard work, against Sadie, that I can lick Rush Gudridge. Now where's your red, game blood?"

For a whole minute Old Johnse stood there staring and said nothing. Then he took a step toward Hanson.

"You ain't got no sense at all," he declared, speaking in the old dialect of the hills. "You go back down thar to the loggin'-camp and make ye a brew o' catnip tea and go to bed."

Hanson gave his sweetheart a glance of good-by, turned and went down to the camp.

He ate but little at the noonday meal. Neither did Rush Gudridge eat enough to make him sluggish. Hanson decided that he would give his challenge within the hour, provided Minton was there to see it all.

WITHIN the hour Minton came. The timber-jacks were lounging here and there, smoking and yarning, on the long porch of the boarding-house. Hanson rose near the doorway, and his eyes met those of his trainer with the

light of understanding. Minton wanted the battle to begin at once.

So Hanson walked straight to Rush Gudridge, who stood with his brother beside the steps, and said quietly:

"Gud, let's have a fight."

All the other loggers heard it, and instant silence fell over them. It was the unbelievable.

"You don't mean it," growled Rush Gudridge.

"Yes, I mean it. And I'll wager everything I've got—except only my fiddle—that I can thrash you just as hard as ever you thrashed any other poor devil," said Wardlaw Hanson.

A pleased expression spread over Gudridge's coarse, heavy countenance. Fighting was the chief pleasure that the world had to offer him.

"Put everything you've got—I wouldn't have your damned fiddle—with the super," he said. "Put up your money, your clothes, everything you've got but the fiddle—I'll match it all."

Hanson had saved two hundred dollars from his wages—with that money he had hoped to finance his start at housekeeping with Sadie Flowers for his wife—and this he placed in the superintendent's hands. Gudridge borrowed from his brother and from his friends, and covered the amount. Then they staked their clothing, their watches, even their pocket-knives.

"And I'll go you one better," dared Gudridge. "I'll bet you my life against your life."

"That would be my bettin' a great deal against almost nothin'," replied Hanson, "but I'm game to the bone, if I do say it myself. How is the thing to be arranged?"

It was a wholly unprecedented experience for Gudridge. He was white with anger now.

"This is how," he fumed. "The man who is bested in this scrap takes a gun and kills himself."

Now to keep his word was a cardinal point in Ward Hanson's own particular religion, therefore Gudridge's daring proposal was staggering to him. It struck him with all the force of a bullet. But he couldn't let Gudridge back him down. Anyway, he was sure of winning. He kept a firm grip on himself, and said as though he were pleased with the idea:

"In the presence of all o' these witnesses, I agree to that."

"Fool," whispered some friends behind him. And Kid Minton, in a voice that was weak but full of delight, cried out:

"That's the dope, Hansy!"

Minton forthwith took charge of his man, and he had an immense pride in it. By the little ex-pugilist's orders, Hanson removed his laced boots and put on a pair of light shoes that had calks in their soles, he shed his thick blue flannel shirt, cut out entirely the sleeves of his undershirt, and took up his belt two notches. While this was being done, the timber-jack champion looked on and smiled pityingly—as for himself, he would fight in the clothing he wore when he worked in the woods.

Then the belligerents chose a level spot between the boarding-house and the commissary, and a ring of anxious and expectant faces was quickly formed around them. The sun was not yet far enough aslant to afford a disadvantage for either of the two. Hanson put up his guard, and bent his shoulders and his knees in the crouch that is familiar to all devotees of the prize ring. Gudridge towered erect and smiled confidently. The contrast between them was sharp, indeed. Hanson was clean-limbed and strong, intelligent and determined—but the bully was so very much bigger.

As was his way in these contests that were without rules, rests or gloves, Rush Gudridge sprang into action with the suddenness of a thunder-clap. Hanson, sure of himself, merely played safe now, and his antagonist wondered why he couldn't land one of his mighty blows. A few minutes of this, and Hanson planted a right neatly on the champion's mouth. Gudridge roared in a blind rage, struck wildly and missed, struck wildly again and missed, strove for a clinch and found his great arms empty. The ever watchful Minton cried:

"Oh, you big—brainless beef. Some class to him, ain't there? He'll save you the trouble—o' committing suicide."

This seemed only to bring Gudridge to his senses. He back-stepped, breathing rapidly but easily, and appeared to be deliberately taking Hanson's measure with his eyes. Hanson pressed him, and the ring of gaping timber-jacks gave away to accommodate the two. Gudridge then feinted with one knotted hand and drove the other hard to Hanson's chest. Hanson reeled to the edge of the ring before he caught his footing, and Minton groaned.

"Follow quick! Rush—kill him!" bellowed Bill Gudridge.

The bully sprang forward with a blow that might have broken bones, if it had but landed. Hanson dodged it nicely and at the same time struck Gudridge heavily on the point of the jaw. With this the fight became such a whirlwind affair that no two of the onlookers saw it alike.

Hanson found himself more and more outmatched in strength, and he noted, as the battle went on, that the other was even taking up some of his tricks. He landed frequently enough, but his blows, although most of them were placed on those spots that are considered vulnerable, seemed to gain little or nothing for him. He was as quick as a panther, and Gudridge landed seldom, but Gudridge's blows were damaging no matter where they fell.

Minton's spirits began to go down. This was the last battle that he would ever witness, and he felt that it was his own—that he himself was fighting Rush Gudridge through Ward Hanson. For him, to see Ward Hanson lose would be more bitter than to die.

But Gudridge also was showing signs of weakening. If Hanson could only stay with the bully long enough. . . .

"Bust his head open, Rush," bawled Bill Gudridge to his brother. "Bust his head open!"

"Spar," cried Kid Minton to his man. "Spar!"

Hanson heard, understood, and obeyed. For five minutes he did nothing more than to carefully avoid being struck, or being caught in the terrible arms of the champion, while Gudridge worked hard and breathed almost in gasps. It was a fair rest for Hanson. He found his strength and his breathing good once more.

Then he went at it in earnest again, and his blows began to tell. Gudridge's face was bruised and bleeding, he fought the fight of a madman now, using not even the simplest tactics. Hanson, his own face so smeared with blood that it was ghastly, began to hope more and more as he coolly chose the places for his blows and drove them home.

Ten minutes of this, and Gudridge was plainly groggy. Hanson began to hammer away regularly at the giant's solar plexus. Gudridge tried in vain to defend the tender spot. Then, with an oath that gurgled its way through blood, he sank to the ground from a heavy punch just under the bottom of his breastbone—whipped!

As a cheer went up from the throats of the majority of the onlookers, Hanson himself sank to the ground. He felt weak and dizzy and helpless, now that it was over, now that he had paid his score and Kid Minton's score, and saved both his life and his property, and become the champion-fighting man of all the Crooked Creek country's logging-camps. Kid Minton, his pitifully thin cheeks flushed with gladness, went to his knees before the victor, took up one of the battered hands and stroked it gently and reverently.

"Lord, what a middleweight you'd make, Hansy," he almost sobbed.

A gaunt, bearded hill-man bent over the new champion. It was old Johnse Flowers.

"I reckon I beg your pardon for what I said about the catnip-tea," he mumbled awkwardly.

Hanson looked up slowly.

"Can I have Sadie?"

But Old Johnse shook his head.

"No I reckon ye cain't have my Sadie."

"Your judgment, Mr. Flowers," said Minton, "is rotten bad."

Wardlaw Hanson accepted the defeated man's money wager and forced it upon Kid Minton, but he wouldn't have the other things. Rush Gudridge, in the greatest disgrace that may befall a Southern mountains timber-jack, started away with his brother, and his brother carried along the clothing, the watch, and the pocket-knife that Hanson had refused.

"Hold on there, you piker," called Kid Minton, before the two had reached the edge of the clearing. "You ain't shot yourself yet, Gud, you know. Come back and pay your bet—I'll lend you a gun!"

The Gudridges did not pause, did not even turn their heads. Wardlaw Hanson whispered:

"Let 'em go, buddy. As it is, it's a glorious riddance."

DAYS passed without event, and the first Sunday in October came. Ward Hanson hastened through with the noonday meal, put a few bits of the choicest of the boarding-house food on a cracked plate and covered it all with an old newspaper, and went off toward the little cabin up the creek.

He found Minton seated in a chair outside. A novel lay open in the sick man's lap, but he was not reading. He was smilingly watching the last of the golden leaves fall, one by one, one by one, from the great poplar that stood nearby.

Hanson, as yet unseen by his friend, stopped and marveled. Surely, he thought, it must be a fine and wonderfully brave spirit that could thus meet and overcome the sadness and the grimness and the cold iron terror of approaching death. His eyes became dim in spite of him, he dashed a hand across them, bit his lip and went on. Minton looked around and saw him.

"How are you feelin', little buddy?" Hanson asked almost tenderly.

"Happy as a dog with two tails," answered Minton. "What you got there?"

"Somethin' for you," said Hanson. "Pumpkin pie, and——"

"Say no more," Minton laughingly interrupted. "The Lord could have made something better to eat than pumpkin pie, perhaps—but He didn't. I'll have it for supper, Hansy, and thanks. Your fiddle is in the cabin there. Get it. I want you to play me the tune of that little song that I know. Did you ever think of it, Hansy, all that has come to pass between you and me—everything, the fight with Gudridge, our friendship, everything—is due to that one—that simple, sweet little tune?"

He had spoken rapidly, and he was out of breath. After a moment he went on, his voice stronger:

"When I have passed, Hansy, the only services I want held over me is—well, I want you to play that song on your fiddle. You'll do it?"

"Yes, son," Hanson replied, choking over the words, "I'll do it."

At that instant, Angel, the man who had been Hanson's sparring partner, hurried out of the undergrowth and confronted Hanson excitedly.

"You'd better light a rag away from here, Ward," panted Angel. "They found Rush Gudridge lying dead in the laurels, and the sheriff and two deputies will be here in five minutes to arrest you for the murder!"

"Rush must have shot himself," exclaimed Minton, surprisedly. "I sure didn't think he had that much man in him."

"No," quickly said Angel. "He was shot from behind, they say, and he couldn't ha' done it himself. Bill Gudridge and his friend Ben Huddle found the body hid in the brush yesterday afternoon, and they really think it was you, Ward, that done it, because it was you that had the motive—and they're swearing they *saw* you shoot Rush. That, of course, is to make sure o' your punishment. They left the body where they found it, and kept quiet about it until they could get the sheriff out here. You was out huntin' squirrels for Kid yesterday afternoon, Ward, you'll remember—and you can't prove an alibi. You'd better run."

Hanson went white, as the truth of Angel's words sank into his brain. Minton rose slowly.

"Look here, Wardlaw," said he, "I didn't think you'd be accused of doing it, or I wouldn't have done it myself, honest, old scout. Because I killed Rush Gudridge myself—the cur dog, I made him pay the bet he forced you to make with him. And Mr. High Sheriff can have me when he wants me. But he won't get much."

Hanson turned to Minton and began to look him straight in the eye—and Minton quailed.

"No, Kid," said the timber-jack, "you didn't kill Gud. You're trying to save me. I'm much obliged, all right, but I'm not goin' to let you save me. Good-by, little buddy—and tell Sadie good-by for me."

He wrung the hands of both Minton and Angel, thought of the fiddle that was dearer than a brother to him and ran for it, and then dove into the laurels and was gone. Angel dove into the laurels in another direction, so that when the officers came they found only Kid Minton, who sat slumped in his chair as though he were sound asleep.

THE mountaineer hates, from birth, the bare thought of arrest. Wardlaw Hanson went with his fiddle to North Carolina, then to Virginia, then to Kentucky, fearing always the blood-red and merciless—to him it was just that—hand of the law, but ever the longing to see Sadie and his people and his home country gnawed at his heart.

And after two years of wandering from one place to another, he decided to risk being caught and stole back to see, once more, that which was so dear to him.

Besides his beloved fiddle, he carried a heavy revolver, and he was ready to use the weapon—circumstantial evidence and false swearing should not hang him or send him

to a State prison for a life-term so long as he had the alternative of dying in his boots.

Quite naturally, he wanted to see his sweetheart Sadie first. So when the cool October darkness had fallen, he stole at a long angle down the side of Blazed Pine Mountain, and halted on an almost level spot midway between the camp boarding-house and the cabin of old Johnse Flowers. There were lights, he noted, in both the cabin and the boarding-house. He smiled softly and turned toward Sadie's home—and came near to falling over a flat slab of sandstone that had been set upright in the ground. It was a crudely-shaped and unlettered gravestone.

"Kid. My little buddy," Hanson said to himself, with a tightening of the throat.

While he had not cherished even the shadow of a hope that he would find Minton alive, this was grief such as he had never known before.

He sank to his knees in the leaves, and made out the dim outline of the other and smaller marker.

"Kid. My little buddy," he repeated thickly. Tears that were bitter streamed down his lean, sunburned cheeks.

And kneeling there his mind went back over the days, the days of gold, that they had spent together. Surely, no other man ever had such a friend as that. And then he remembered—he had promised Minton that he would play that sad, simple little tune that had brought them together—it was the only burial service that Minton had wanted. . . .

Wardlaw Hanson thumbed the strings of his violin, for now it was not a fiddle, and put them where he wanted them. Then he rose, lifted the instrument into place under his chin, and played there in the still, dark mountain night that which was the tribute, the prayer, the benediction, and the doxology of his love, the air of that little song that Minton and his mother before him had known:

> Somebody's darling long ago:
> Nobody's darling now!

You do not like the song, perhaps, and, perhaps, I do not like it—but *we* have not been through the shadows that Minton and his mother went through. Over and over he sent it into the night, the tribute and the prayer, the benediction and the doxology of his love.

He had never played like that before. They heard it at the boarding-house, its mellow, tremulous, soulful strains reached to the ears of those in the cabin of old Johnse Flowers—dark figures, those of men and women who knew who it was that tore at the violin's heart like that, began to move through the laurels toward the lonesome tomb on the mountainside, and the foremost one of them all was a very pretty young woman who was half broken-hearted with waiting and longing.

When Hanson lowered his violin, she was kneeling before him, a lover who loved well enough to worship the object of her love. Though he could not see her face, Hanson knew her at once. He took her by an arm and lifted her to her feet, and kissed her on the forehead after the fashion of mountain men.

"It was my cousin, Nathan Flowers, that killed him," whispered Sadie. "Nathan. He told me and pap, and then he took two shots at the sheriff and left in a hurry. But you was already gone, and we couldn't find you. And it's—Wardlaw, honey, it's all right with pap now."

His arms tightened about her shoulders. There were rapid footsteps in the leaves behind him, and he turned his head to see the slim figure of a man in boots and corduroys hastening toward him.

"Hansy," cried the slim figure, with the joy of ages in his boyish voice. He did not see the girl.

"Hansy. What in ——'s name are you playing my pet song over the grave of that —— Gudridge for? See how I can cuss? I'm a timber-jack now."

"Kid!" gasped Wardlaw Hanson of the fiddling Hansons. "Kid Minton, my buddy—and alive!"

Not only was Minton alive, he was almost well of his malady. He groped, because of the dimness of his eyes and the darkness, for the hand of his friend—and he found it.

Thanks to the Devil

by Frederick Simpich

Author of "An Arizona Lochinvar."

THEY take the devil seriously in China. Mike Flaherty had discovered this important truth, away back in Boxer days, when he floated into Pekin with Uncle Sam's troops.

"This is one country where the devil sure makes his bluff stick," Mike was wont to declare.

In fact, but for Mike's intimate knowledge of the devil and his works, the pigtail town of Pao-ling up in the shadow of the Great Wall, might still be without train service, and Mike himself would doubtless be back where his railroad career started—driving spikes on the Texas Hookworm line.

But he isn't. Just because he understood the ways of the devil in China, Mike is married for life to a soft job with the American Construction Company—the same concern that used to fire him at least once every thirty days.

Now from Shan to Pao-ling is an even hundred miles—miles of old mud-wall villages, forests of grave-mounds where countless ancestors lie buried—miles of ignorance and superstition, miles of Chinese as wild and primitive as in the days of Genghis Khan. Through this hostile region the Belgian syndicate had acquired its railroad concession, and its track, just completed, had been laid by the American Construction Company.

It was to inspect the finished job that Big Bill Watts, president of the American Construction Company, had come up from Pekin. With Temple, his chief engineer, Watts was to make the first official run over the new line, in company with two agents of the syndicate.

Before the temporary terminal shed at Shan, an engine and private car stood ready.

Riley, an American driver, sat in the cab pulling on a cob pipe. He became very busy with this pipe, as Watts and Temple walked past, so busy that he failed to return the condescending nod which Watts gave him. Among some of the men on the American Construction staff, President Watts was not personally popular.

While waiting for the Belgian agents to arrive at the station, Watts and Temple continued their stroll about the littered construction yards, discussing the work.

"What the devil is that?" demanded Watts, pausing at sight of a grotesque object mounted on a flat car that stood under a shed of bamboo and straw mats.

"You guessed it," chuckled a cheery voice, as Mike Flaherty himself rose from behind the hideous reptilian effigy. "It's a devil, all right, and a dandy, too. Wait till I make him wink."

And Flaherty, carried on the A. C. roll as track-gang boss, snapped an electric switch, turning a baleful red glare from the enormous eyes of the painted silk and wood dragon sprawled full length on the flat car.

"What's it doing here?" growled Watts.

"This is a construction outfit—not a museum of Oriental horrors."

"Tomorrow's the dragon feast-day," Flaherty explained. "These Chinks has their big parade on the grand canal, with dragons all lit up. The chief of police here in Shan, he asks me to help 'em build a dragon here in the shops. Tonight we'll shunt the car down the line, to the canal bank, and unload this big fellow in the water. It didn't cost the A. C. much—and it makes us strong with the pigtails. Matter of policy to humor 'em a bit, as I told the chief here."

"A matter of dollars and cents wasted," retorted Watts. "Flaherty, we hire and fire you to boss coolie gangs—not to monkey with devils——"

"But the devil cuts a lot of ice with these people," insisted Flaherty. "As I was tellin' the chief here——"

"You talk too much," snapped Watts. "We're building railroads—not circus-parade dragons." And he walked away, Temple at his side, an amused look in his eye.

"You better fire Flaherty," admonished Watts. "You know, Temple, the A. C. has got to preserve its dignity and discipline. Flaherty's a disgrace, mixing up Chinese superstition and Chinese rice-wine like he does."

"I do fire him occasionally, as a matter of discipline," admitted Temple. "But I'm afraid every time I do it."

"Afraid of what?"

"Afraid he'll quit. And he's too good a man to lose. No man on the force can handle Chinese like Flaherty. Only last week he saved us a big row at Yalo. Yalo is a little town out on our new line, about half-way to Pao-ling. Our two gangs, working in from either end, met there and the natives saw an engine for the first time. If Flaherty hadn't been there, I don't know what would have happened.

"The crazy natives objected to the fire in the engine, said it was an evil spirit. They tried to run our workmen off with spears. Flaherty, who speaks their lingo, jollied 'em along. Finally humored 'em by drawing the fire, and hooking a lot of mules to the engine. Then he hauled it up and down the track, just to show them it was only an "iron wagon" after all, and not a devil. He's a born diplomat, Flaherty. When all else fails, he works ventriloquism on 'em, or some punk slight-of-hand stuff."

"He does, eh?" said Watts, tolerantly.

"Yes—and we need him. Our troubles aren't over yet. The governor told me yesterday that the peasants around Yalo are up in arms—sent a committee to him, hollering because we tore up an old graveyard when we ran that spur out to the gravel-pit. We're bound to have trouble at first, running trains through Yalo."

"Let the Belgians worry about that," grinned Watts. "We'll make our final inspection run today. Tomorrow we'll turn the line over to the syndicate—cancel our bond and collect our fee. After that, why worry?"

"Getting through today, with our special, is what's worrying me," insisted Temple. "Flaherty hears all the rumors. He says they're liable to jump us at Yalo. I asked the governor for a military escort, but he either didn't have soldiers to spare, or didn't want to send 'em."

"Soldiers, nonsense," grumbled Watts. "That old '700' will buck any pigtail line at Yalo. You're as bad as Flaherty, Temple. You take these pagans too seriously. Come on," he added, "there are the Belgian agents."

Presently, having met and formally greeted the portly, bearded money-grubbers from Brussels, the party settled itself comfortably in the private car, and, easily at first, then with increasing speed, they soon were rolling smoothly out through the suburbs of the bustling, odorous, city of Shan.

It was a momentous occasion to the American Construction Company. It had finished its contract within a day of the time limit—and the Belgians, suave and polite, congratulated President Watts on his accomplishment, jocularly observing that they would not now be able to collect the forfeit of a thousand sterling a day, the penalty specified in the contract for any delay.

Watts was in rare good-humor. Temple, somehow, felt restless and uneasy. He could not shake off a vague, insistent feeling that all was not right at Yalo. Even in the whistle of old "700," as she blew for crossings and villages, he fancied there came a note of sadness, of farewell, as if the engine were saying goodby in its plunge north, toward Yalo.

LEAVING Watts to entertain the Belgians, Temple seated himself alone in the rear of the car, his back to the party, watching the track slip from under, watching the dull, drab land of poverty

and superstition sliding past. As they swept north through flat fields of brown hemp, past herds of lean goats tended by ragged, silent boys, the spell of the brooding world-old country fell on him.

Moodily he gazed out on the yellow, muddy canals, where naked coolies in flat boats fished with trained cormorants, iron rings about the captive birds' necks, that they might not swallow the fish they caught. In worn, gullied fields work-weary women raked up dead weeds and bound them into bales for Winter fuel. Girls of twelve, bent under babies lashed on their aching backs, went about their tasks doggedly, hopelessly. Life seemed making a spiritless fight, with death the inevitable winner.

As the train raced farther into the wilder north country, the villages, crude-walled and watch-towered—mere huddles of squat, flat-roofed hovels made of bamboo and plastered mud, became less and less frequent. The people, too, no longer ignored the rushing train, or merely stared dully as it passed. Now they would shriek excitedly, or gesticulate, or flee.

"What are they running for?" queried Watts, coming back to where Temple sat.

"Still afraid of the engine. Except for a few glimpses of the work-trains, crawling along, they're not familiar yet with engines. Probably some of 'em never saw one before."

"Queer country," commented Watts, going back to his guests.

It was late in the afternoon when they rounded a low hill, and neared Yalo.

Then, like most railroad accidents, it happened suddenly, unexpectedly. Warning screams from the engine, violent jerks as emergency brakes whined, and the whole party sprawled roughly on the car floor as they came to a sudden stop.

Scrambling to his feet, Temple ran to the rear platform, followed by the others. Crowds of angry Chinese were swarming about, and in a jiffy a score of stalwart Manchus—the giants of north China—had leaped up the car steps and overpowered the astonished foreigners. Dragged roughly with kicks and cuffs, the white men were hustled off the platform and along beside the car, up the track toward the Yalo station. So thick was the crowd that surged about them, their progress was slow.

The engine, Temple noted, seemed to have mysteriously disappeared. Beside the track, too, was a towering heap of fresh earth now covered with busy coolies working furiously with shovels.

As Temple was driven forward by his captors, he came suddenly on Riley struggling fiercely in the grip of three giant, crazed-looking Manchus. The engineer was bleeding from a cut on the head, and his shirt was torn half off in front, exposing his heaving, hairy breast.

"Take it easy, man," warned Temple. "And tell me what's happened."

"Happened," snorted the enraged engineer. "They buried my engine, the murderin' heathens!"

"They *what?*"

"They buried my engine," panted Riley. "Buried old 700. Had a grave dug—right under the rails. I didn't see the trap in time to stop. Reversed 'er, and jumped in time to keep from goin' down myself. She paused, right on the edge of the deep hole, then toppled in, takin' my native fireman with her. See them coolies on that dirt-pile, with shovels—they're coverin' her up now, burying my old 700, the —— fools."

And Riley, with a Herculean wrench, tore his good right arm free and sent a soporific upper-cut straight to the yellow jaw of one of his captors.

Further excited by this resistance, the yelling Chinese hurried their prisoners forward, toward the station. Passing around the dirt-pile, the white men could look down into the engine's grave—already the hissing monster was half covered with earth.

"Bury the fire-devil alive," Temple heard the mob shouting.

A hundred yards up the track, near the station, stood an A. C. tool-house. Into this the foreigners were roughly shoved, and the door locked.

The Belgians whispered together, nervously. Watts, finding his voice for the first time since he had been dragged, dazed and unresisting, from the car steps, began to fret.

"The brigands," he complained. "Our embassy shall hear of this—I'll fix these heathen upstarts. Just wait till I get to Pekin, I'll fix 'em."

Temple, peering through a crack in the wooden door, was surveying the scene outside. Hundreds of wild-looking Manchus, some armed with spears, old guns, bows and arrows, and some carrying stink-pots, were crowded about, jabbering frantically. A few rode camels. There was a short, thick brass cannon, too, apparently taken from

one of the canal junks. It lay on a squat wooden carriage, drawn by a dozen coolies harnessed to a long rope. Though his knowledge of Chinese was imperfect, Temple could catch now and then a sentence from the babble that went on.

"What are they saying?" queried Watts, uneasily.

"They're crowing now," Temple growled, "over their feat in burying the fire-devil, as they call it. They say engines are evil spirits that do the bidding of us foreigners, that we're all barbarians and ghouls, that we dug up their ancestors' graves, and shall be punished for it."

"I'll show 'em who gets punished, when I get to Pekin," threatened Watts, boasting to keep up his courage.

"Yes—when you get there," muttered Temple, half to himself.

Riley had squeezed through the little party and crawled back among the piles of wheelbarrows, tools and junk that littered the dark shed, on a quiet exploration trip of his own. He was back now, grabbing Temple excitedly by the arm.

"I've found it," he gloated. "I knew they'd had one in here—but I was afraid they'd taken it out. So I didn't say a word till I'd found it, for sure."

"Found what?" interrupted Watts irritably.

"Telegraphone!"

Already Temple had started for it. The little party, tense and expectant, waited—hopefully. Outside, the heathen clamor raged unabated.

"Hello. Hello. Hello A. C. office—this is Temple, at Yalo. Is that you, Flaherty—give me the chief clerk—everybody's gone home but you? Then listen closely, Flaherty. Our special's held up here. The track's broken and the engine's in a hole. Chinese have us locked up in the tool-house, under guard. Now you inform the governor immediately, and have him—what's that?—Of course the governor can help us. Now you shut up, and listen to me. You go at once—what? *You* don't need any help from the governor? Now, listen, Flaherty, this is serious. A thousand mad Chinks are threatening us. You've got to act *quick*. Tell the governor—You won't waste time on *him!* Say, Flaherty, are you crazy or drunk?—Not too drunk to take care of us, eh? All right then. Now you—Hello! Hello!"

Impatient, exasperated, Temple continued to shout, to rattle the hook and curse.

"No wonder you're cut off," called Riley in disgust, turning from his lookout post at the crack in the door. "The rascals are pulling down the wires."

"—— that Flaherty," invoked Temple earnestly.

"You hired him once too often," croaked Watts. "What's the matter—couldn't you make the fool understand?"

"He understood. But he refused absolutely to notify the authorities—said we'd be butchered before they could get troops here—or do anything else for us. He just kept repeating, like a parrot, 'I don't need any help from the governor—just leave it to Flaherty.'"

"But what can *he* do?" whined Watts.

"Ask me something easy," retorted Temple, resuming his vigil at the door-crack.

Plainly some sort of plan had been agreed on by the crowd. Though a strong guard of spearmen and a few town coolies with old rifles remained on duty about the tool-house, most of the mob was withdrawing toward the village.

About the arched gateway of the mud-walled town some sort of mass-meeting seemed under way. From the back of a camel, an aged man was haranguing the people. Occasionally bursts of cheers floated back to the imprisoned white men, now relapsed into moody, uneasy reflection. From his post at the door Temple watched and waited, cramped, hungry and thirsty, as the light faded and night came on. Red fires had been lit in the village now, and the natives were beating drums and playing weird music on their shrill flutes.

IT WAS long after dark when the demonstration at the village gate ended. Then, with renewed yells and frantic chattering, the mob came surging back toward the railroad. A tall, gaunt Manchu on a camel seemed to be their leader. Slapping his beast on the neck with his thick camel-stick, he rode it straight up to the tool-house, and ordered the guards to open the door. Temple and Riley—the others hanging back—stepped outside.

From the light of a small fire, lit by the guards, the white men could see the withered, yellow face of the old patriarch on the camel. At a gesture from him, the people

quieted, and he began speaking. Most of what he said was plain to Riley and Temple.

For a thousand moons, he said, his people had lived in this region, happy and undisturbed by foreign devils and their evil work. Chinese who traveled were content to ride on camels, or mules, or in palanquins—not in iron wagons drawn by fire-devils. Also the graves of Chinese ancestors were sacred. Yet the outer barbarians, in building their accursed iron road, had torn up the tombs of countless grandfathers—leaving the holy bones to be gnawed by jackals.

He, the head man of the village, had with difficulty restrained his people from slaying the foreigners when first taken from the iron wagon. But that would have been murder, and he had a prejudice against murder. Justice should be done—but not vulgarly, by a mob. Hence he had called a council, and discussed the question calmly.

Here was the verdict—the whites should choose, among themselves, one of their number, preferably the most calm, observant man, the one best able to relate all he was to see. This man should then observe carefully all that was to happen and should be able to understand just why the Chinese had found certain measures necessary.

Then, when all was over, this one man should be sent, safe and unharmed, back to Shan. There he should tell all other foreigners just what he had seen—which should be a warning to them never again to venture near Yalo, desecrate graves, or try to run more fire-devils from Shan to Pao-ling.

The whites would be given all night in which to deliberate, and choose the one man. Then, at sunrise, their choice made, the remaining members of the party were to be neatly and quietly beheaded by a kind and experienced executioner.

When the old speaker had finished, Riley and Temple were pushed back into the toolshed, and the door locked.

"Speak up, you fellows," fussed Watts. "Did he say when they're going to let us go?"

Temple pinched Riley's arm, warningly.

"He says," lied the chief engineer manfully, "that they'll leave us here tonight, to think things over."

"Pardon, monsieur," interrupted one of the Belgians politely, "but I too, have study the Chinese conversation considerable. I comprehend fully. We're to die, *n'est-ce pas?* We are to lose the *tête, à la bonne heure,* tomorrow."

To the pitiably frightened Watts, Temple reluctantly admitted the whole truth. It was only when he mentioned that one of the party was to be spared that Watts' self-control revived somewhat.

"Of course," he faltered, "you and Riley being single men—and—considering that I have a family——"

"Pardon, monsieur," said a Belgian softly, "we should be lonely in Paradise without you. And fancy what an interesting party we shall be, entering the pearly gates each carrying his own head under his arm. *Que bizarre.*"

"Sure," snorted Riley, shaking his fists savagely, "we'll stick together. They can kill us, maybe, but I'm —— if I lie down peaceful and quiet, as for a morning shave back in Keokuk, and let 'em shop my neck like a Christmas turkey. Not Pat Riley, thank you—I'll be kickin' some slant-eyed savage in the throat good and hard, when I cash in. And if I can get my hooks on that big sword, I'll take Mister Ax-man along with us to glory—you see if I don't!"

A STARTLING commotion, rising suddenly outside, drew Temple quickly back to his post at the door-crack. Plainly some danger, invisible to Temple, had alarmed the whole assembly. Chinese scurried up from all directions, pointing and gesticulating. Camel-men galloped to and fro, and coolies tugged frantically at the clumsy brass cannon, dragging it up on to the railroad. Temple vainly sought for a crack on the south side of the shed, that he might see what was happening there. Finding none, he stumbled back to the door.

Panic, unreasoning and terrifying, now seemed to seize the mob. Already many had dropped their long spears, plunging away into the darkness. Others—firing their old rifles at random—fled for life toward the village. Once only the brass cannon, hastily and badly aimed, growled hoarsely sending a solid shot crashing back into the mud-walled houses in the village.

Again and again a terrible screech, coming nearer and nearer, split the echoing heavens, and startled camels raised their ludicrous bawls high above the groans of fear-choked, fleeing men. Then from up where the engine lay buried, a red glare burst forth, and down along the switch which

paralleled the main line there came racing and screeching such a monster as even superstition-soaked Yalo never dreamed of.

Slowing down on the switch now, in plain sight of Temple at his peep-hole, came the hell-demon itself, the big red dragon from Shan!

Flat on his translucent belly he sprawled atop the car, lit up by electricity from his big red mouth to the curled-up tip of his long yellow tail—a truly hideous and frightful thing in the pitch black of a moonless north China night.

"Even the bedridden cripples got up and galloped when they saw *me* comin'," chuckled Flaherty, crawling down from the cab of the switch-engine with which he'd pushed the flat car up from Shan.

"I know these Chinks—can handle 'em better than the governor—or the consuls," he added, as he got a hammer and pounded off the padlock to release the white men from their stuffy prison.

"I just grabs the big he-dragon, flat car and all, when I heard how you was sewed up here. Swiped the siren-whistle off our little fire-engine in the lumber-yard, and rigged her on as we come up the line. Sufferin' sea-serpents, but didn't they scoot!"

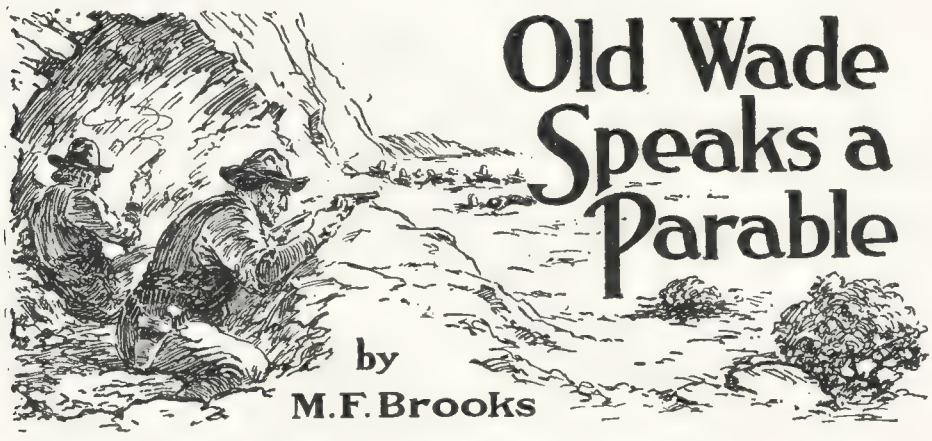
Watts, tottering from the tool-house, had already climbed unsteadily up into the cab.

"Come on now," he urged, half hysterically, "let's get back to Shan—before those heathen show up again."

"Why not on to Pao-ling!" grinned Flaherty. "That's my plan. Switch back and pick up your car—and finish the inspection run on time—save the forfeit!"

"You—think we could do it?" queried President Watts, a trifle encouraged, as he felt the big switch-engine panting.

"Easy," asserted Flaherty. "We got the devil right with us."



Old Wade Speaks a Parable

by

M. F. Brooks

Author of "The Manhood of a Chinaman."

WE had been "doin' time," as Old Wade expressed it. For three months we had been working in Last Chance and Red Rock cañons, tributaries to, or near neighbors to Jaw-Bone cañon, out in the Randsburg District. I looked at Measles, he looked first at me, then at Old Wade, and then says:

"Pard Hampton, if you-all kin keep that sleep-walkin' burro in camp fer twenty minutes, we'll jine the percession eastward."

And we did. We first hiked over to Randsburg, "jest to git a touch of high life. an' fill up clean water-barrels," Measles says, But Measles never was strong on water when he hit a town, so we knew we would have to attend to the water-wagon part of it and let Measles absorb what "high life" he could while we were restocking the outfit for the desert.

We were sitting out in front of the old Hauser eat house in Randsburg, picking our teeth and waiting for Measles to show up. He had gone 'round the corner to the post-office, some four hours earlier. We had

warned him that we and the burros would leave for the Valley prompt at four P.M., and we was waiting for either Measles, or the said four P.M. prompt to arrive—whichever might arrive first.

Down the street comes a streak, accompanied by a *honk! honk!* that was sure some noise.

The streak swings in to the curb, the honk stops tooting, and a big, slab-sided guy, done all up in ruffled linen shirt front and white flannel pants, jumps from the auto—that's what it was—and grabs Old Wade. I didn't have any chance to swing on him, 'cause what with the noise of his *honk*, the surprise of his Barney Oldfield finish, and his immaculate make-up, I was flabbergasted.

Then he hugs Old Wade, and paws him, and biffs, and bangs him, all the time calling him pet names, and he pounds Old Wade on the back till his mouth flies open, and then when Old Wade tries to say some talk, he jabs a big, black cigar in his face, links arms with him and says:

"Come on, old hoss. Jump in my buzz wagon an' I'll frisk you over to a drink-stall in some class."

But at last Old Wade breaks away. He backs off a ways and kind of sizes the animile up. From patent-leather ties, his eye takes in the whole make-up—shoes, bright green socks, pretty white trousers, belt, befluted shirt front, collar and little, dinky, stiff hat.

"Well I'm bats," says Old Wade. "I thought it was a man, and here it's only Sob."

They gets together and goes to shaking hands again. And then Measles comes up, walking too straight to be very sober, and he says as how it is four P.M. and time we was hitting the trail. And I goes up and breaks in on Old Wade and his pal, and begs their pardon, and says as how as the procession is all ready to move.

Old Wade introduces me to the living phonograph and names him as "Sob" Howland. But said Sob Howland don't ever stop talking; he simply shies me a look, digs into a pocket and hands me some cigars—each one big enough to choke a dog. I lights up one and stood watching the manlet for a spell, kind of pondering as to whether it would be best to kick him, or slap him on the wrist. I kind of compromised by coming to the conclusion that it was only a dude and not responsible anyhow, and I goes back to where Measles stands as straight as a lamp-post taking in the show.

"No chance, Measles," I says. "There's no chance whatever to clear the hall and get the audience dispersed until the show's over and the show will continue till the last record is played over by that human phonograph."

"Huh," says Measles, "watch me!"

I watches him, all right, and it was sure some good watching. He walks right up to where the pair of them was spieling. And walks with that stiff, set, too steady a walk that no sober man can ever pull off. Old Wade sees him coming an' he just kind of nods at him, but Measles didn't pay any attention to him. He just walks up to Mr. White Pants, and inserts one of his five by seven hands under his collar and takes a grip on the seat of said pantaloons with his other hand, raises the human Edison patent off his feet, carries him to the edge of the porch and dumps him into the street. Measles takes off his hat and bows to Mister Sob, and says:

"I don't know, stranger, if I'm addressin' a ex-card sharp er a ex-preacher. If yer is a ex-preacher man, the sisters needs yer at the sewin' circle; if yer is a ex-card grafter I has ter apolergise fer not kickin' yer."

In the meantime, Mister Sob had gathered hisself together, and when Measles had got through with his speech, he was looking into the business end of as good a thirty-eight gun as I ever saw. I don't know where he dug it up from, for them pants didn't seem capable of concealing such a gun; but there it was, and there wasn't a quiver to the hand that was back of it.

"Up hands, Mister But-in-sky, "says Sob, "and up hands *muy pronto*, if yer ever intends to git 'em up."

Now Measles don't belong in the real fool class, and the hole in the business end of a thirty-eight is acceptable to him as good argument. So his hands go skyward without a second invite. And Mister Sob just smiled and told Measles what he thought about him and all of his kin-folks, an' finally marched him ahead of him up street to a store where he invited him, with the gun argument still in force, to purchase a new dude outfit for him.

And when Measles had paid the bill, he escorted him to the door, kicked him and

told him to go home to Ma, and study to be a preacher.

Measles came back to us sober. Old Wade smiles, and says:

"It's four-thirty P.M., Measles. If yer has finished all yer business affairs, I guess we had better hit the trail fer the Valley. Some folks gets along better where they don't meet so many men."

WE HAD been three days on the trail after leaving Randsburg. Measles had sometimes mumbled replies when we had asked him direct questions, but his experience with Sob had sunk in deep, and he seemed unable to rally to his usual, good-natured, former self. For two days we had been struggling through a storm. And such a storm. Only those who have experienced a sand-storm in the desert can form an idea of its horrors—of its awfulness.

Here, where the sun usually holds sway over everything, burning, scorching, blistering, now is an atmosphere turned to a yellow blur with the whirling, cutting, throat-parching sand and alkali. Landmarks are blotted out, trails are obliterated, sand hills are leveled and carried on with hot winds to be piled up at other points, to in a day create new sand hills—yes, at times, mountains of sand. One can not breathe without seeming to inhale into mouth, throat and lungs the acrid, stifling sand.

The throat fills with the burning mass. The eyes are inflamed, bloodshot, undependable. The flinty particles seem to cut through clothing and irritate the skin. The dried, cut skin of face and hands tells too plainly the force by which these particles are impelled, and the inflamed, burning skin wherever exposed is irritated by the alkali dust which is ever present here.

To go forward is to travel aimlessly, for no man can see sufficient distance ahead to distinguish landmarks. To struggle against such storm, is death, sure and certain, for human endurance can not successfully combat this giant of the desert.

This had been our experience for two days, and all through this pelting, choking experience, Measles had been one with us in all its attendant labors, but he had offered never a word. I came upon him once when he was pushing and urging one of the burros toward the rest of the bunch. His eyes were too full of sand for him to notice me, and I overheard him communing with the beast.

"Hunch along," I heard him yell. "Move, yer hump-backed lump of sin. Maybe I am a candy-date fer the sewin' circle, but there 'aint no pie-faced parson I ever see as could play even in sich a game as this. It takes some man to beat this desert game. Parson—huh—move, blast yer. Yer has a *man* behind yer."

And now, with stars shining above, with a camp-fire flickering, and with blankets spread ready to roll up in them for the night, my attention is called to Measles by his rolling over on his stomach and breaking the silence with his peculiar "huh." He picks up a pebble and flips it into the fire. Then he says—

"Mister Hampton, I'd like to ask yer a question."

Old Wade turns and looks at him, and says—

"Shoot."

"I'd jest like to know who the gent was, up there at the Burg?"

"Oh," says Old Wade. "Him? We used to call him Sob Howland, but he's 'Mister' Howland, now."

"I don't know nothin' 'bout his weepin' fits," says Measles, "but I'll bank he's been some right smart man, some day.

"Yep," says Old Wade. "I've took notice that when yer finds a man as kin rise right *pronto* to the occasion, yer kin pretty near bank on him. Yer can't always size a man up by his togs, nor by the job he's holdin' down."

"Guess I got what was comin' to me, all right," says Measles. "But there wa'n't no use of his recommendin' me to a parson job."

"Mebby not," says Old Wade. "But it ain't what we gets that does us good; it's what we learns. An' mebby, what yer got up there will lesson yer somethin'."

"Sob ain't no name," says Measles. "What's his real name?"

Now I had a hunch, by the way Old Wade and Sob had embraced up at the hotel, that there had been a past betwixt them, and a past between Old Wade and any live man meant a story. So I butts in, and says:

"Where did you make his acquaintance, Wade?"

"Daggett," says Old Wade.

"Was he holdin' down a parson job out there?" asks Measles, kind of sarcastic-like.

"Jest before my meetin' him, his last job had been shootin' up greasers," says Old Wade.

"I opines he's some shootist," says Measles, "an' from the natural way he handles a gun, I also opines it was chips an' six-guns an' not prayer books he was used to handlin'."

"But why did they name him Sob?" says I. "Neither Measles nor I didn't notice much weeping in his make-up at Randsburg."

"It's a story that goes back a good many years," says Old Wade. "Old-timers about the desert says as how as he used to be a prospector in the hills, an' a sport when in town. They says as how as he gets clipped in the head with a hammer once, an' when he gits out again he jest naturally couldn't help weepin' or snivelin' whenever he got some excited.

"If he gets tickled overmuch about somethin', he'd sob, if he was real disappointed, he'd weep, if he bet on a ace full an' the other feller swiped the stakes, it was him fer a cry spell. It wasn't 'cause he wanted to, but 'cause he jest naturally couldn't help it, fer everybody what knows him, knows he's game. There was jest a misplacement somewhere's in his bean what caused it."

"He seemed tickled to death the other day to see you, and I didn't notice any sobs," says I.

"He was tickled to see me 'cause I cured him of throwin' sobs," says Old Wade.

"As how?" asks Measles.

"I HAD drifted into the Valley from the North country," says Old Wade, "and in my rambles I finds myself at Daggett. I was sittin' in the shade of a shack, when all at once a guy comes stumblin' 'roun' the corner, kinder gropin' his way along, an' he butts into me an' falls all over me in a heap.

"He was sure some sight to look at—face all swelled an' blistered, an' tongue stickin' out of his mouth, an' kind of a bluish white. Say, he was a fright. I rolls him over an' he jist grunts an' pints to his mouth. I rushes into a booze joint an' calls fer volunteers to help carry in a stiff, an' we soon has him stretched comfortable-like on the floor of the saloon.

"We gits him patched up in a few hours so as he could talk some, an' he tells us as how he an' a partner was steerin' a outfit across the desert, boun' fer Los Angeles. They was camped at a water-hole over in the Solo District. There was five in the outfit—three tenderfeet an' him an' his partner. His pard goes up a draw to git any old thing that would burn, an' this feller, who was the same Sob Howland as we meets at Randsburg, he takes a hike up in the foot hills of the Soda Lake Range, lookin' fer a jack, 'er any old live thing he could shoot.

"He had'nt been gone very long when he hears shootin' over toward camp. He climbs onto a ridge where he could see the outfit, an' what he sees is a plenty. Fifteen or twenty Mexicans had jumped the outfit an' was shootin' it up proper.

"He starts back on the jump, an' when he strikes the Valley he sees his partner who was makin' his git-away fer the hills. His partner sees him an' yells at him to make fer the hills again. They gits together an' makes tracks fer the high ground, aimin' to either hide, or to git located where they could make a stand an' scrap it out with the Mex. outfit without bein' surrounded an' rushed off their feet.

"They gets in a good place, all right, a sort of hole in the wall where they couldn't be rushed from no place only in front. And then he learns that his partner was hurt. One of the greasers had jabbed him with a knife, in the mix-up at the camp. The Mex. outfit follers them to their hole in the wall an' fer an hour or so considerable gun-play was on. Then the greasers leaves some of their party there to shoot 'em up if they tries to make a sneak, an' the balance goes back to the water-hole to licker up, an' go through the camp outfit.

"Two of the tenderfeet had been killed when they was first surprised by the greasers, an' the other had skipped out across the dry soda lake bed. The Mex. gang didn't foller him far, fer they knows he wouldn't last long goin' in that direction, without water.

"Sob gits busy, soon as possible, an' tries to patch up his partner's wounded arm. But when he starts to clean up the cut, he finds neither of them has brought any water. An' then they begins to realize that their chances was mighty slim to ever git out alive. The Mex. gang had looked like a tough proposition to them before, but they was desert-wise plenty to know that the dirty outfit of greasers wasn't ace high to their sure enough trouble—no water.

"They stays in their hole in the wall all that night. The Mex. outfit tries two or three sneak rushes on 'em, but they staved them off an' made coyote food out of some. An' then a sand-storm comes up. Don't come from nowheres, it jest starts in full grown, an' raspenarious like. An' what them two men suffers there in their hole in the wall, breathin' in the alkali an' sand with no water to ease off the awfulness of it must of been a plenty.

"Yer has heard tell of ill winds that blows some folks to the good? Well it's a cinch that them winds—them hot, sand-filled alkali, chokin', desert winds didn't blow nothin' but hell to either of them pilgrims. It gets to where they jest has to have water, especially the wounded pard. By this time his arm was stiff an' the wound inflamed.

"Sob gits busy inspectin' their hole in the wall an' finds a crack, or break, leadin' most straight up. He clears away some boulders an' sees where a active man might make his git-away. So he goes back to his pard, tells him of his find, leaves him his six-gun as a extra life preserver, an' tells him as how he is goin' to make a sneak to the water-hole an' try to corral some water. They both sees that was their only chanst, as the wounded pard couldn't nohow shin up the rock wall an' make his git-away.

"So Sob cuts loose. He shins up to the top of the hole an' by takin' a roun'-about way he comes up near the camp. The Mex. outfit was mostly asleep, or covered up with blankets to keep the sand out of their faces. Sob sneaks up an' takes a drink out of the water-hole, an' looks aroun' fer a old can 'er somethin' to git water in fer his pard. An' then he spies, hangin' on a yucca stem, a couple of canteens. An' he begins to do a snake crawl among the greasers after them canteens. He gits to 'em, an' lifts one. It was plumb full. He slings it 'round his neck, an' grabs the other. It was empty. He snakes back to the water-hole agin to fill it, an' jest as he raises up to make his git-away, in comes one of the Mex. outfit from the hills.

"The sand was blowin' somethin' grievous, an' the Mex. couldn't see straight, an' mistakes Sob fer one of his pards, an' speaks to him. Sob don't say nothin'. He jest ambles up to him an' swipes him on the bean with the canteen an' flits fer the hills, with the whole bunch yellin' an' shootin' like mad. He shakes 'em, an' gits back to his pard. An' then them Mexicans rush 'em again. But Sob was always some handy with a gun, an' his pard holds up his end of the play, even if he didn't have only one good hand, an' they beats 'em off.

"An' then there was a regular Mex. jaw-fest. Any old kind of a greaser is big casino when it comes to workin' his jaw when he's peeved. But that don't worry Sob an' his pard none. They knows Mex. They knows any old kind of a fool kin make a heap of noise with his mouth, but like a twenty-two gun it ain't got no penetrativeness. But they knows, too, that they are bound to be Mex. meat, in the end.

"They ain't got no grub, an' mighty little water. They sees their finish. They knows the wounded pard can't make the climb through the rock crack, an' they know that's the only way out. But they ain't either of 'em quitters, an' Sob Howland was too true blue to think of desertin' his pard, even to save his own life. They was both desert men. They both knows that God loves any old kind of a anamile better'n a quitter. 'God gives us sand to use,' is their motto. An' finally pard says:

"'Sob, I kin hold out here agin them greasers till the Valley freezes over. Now listen to me. You take one of them canteens an' make your git-away.'

"Sob looks at him surprised like, thinkin' he had gone nutty with the heat, an' with his wound.

" 'That'll be about all, pard,' says Sob. 'When we leaves here, we both leaves over the same trail. Better take a little sip of water, pard.'

"And pard, he jest smiles a tired kind of smile an' says:

" 'It's the only way out of this mess, Sob. Don' lose no time, but fade away *pronto*.'

"An' Sob says:

" 'Pard, I ain't no beaut to look at, an' I don't feel a whole lot better'n I looks, jest now, but when you sizes me up as leavin' you, you has made a rank mistake.'

"An' pard says:

"'I ain't calkerlatin' to make no mistakes. No man can't afford to git the mistake habit—life's too short. Mistakes, mostly, is nothin' less'n crime, an' take it from me, Sob, I don't knowin'ly trot in no crime class. Most mistakes is a crime agin a man's brain box, an' agin his thinker. The main cause of mistakes is 'cause a feller uses his thinker to guess with, when he'd

ought to use it to think with, an' to reason with.'

" 'I ain't goin' to copper no such bet as that,' says Sob. 'But allee samee there ain't no chanst fer us to beat this game, so we might as well settle peaceful like to killin' greasers while we last, an' let it go at that.'

" 'Yer is plumb wrong agin, Sob,' says pard. 'In this here life it ain't what you've got as counts; it is the feller what ain't got, an' still makes good, as is the blue-ribbon citizen. An' pard, listen to this little preachment—even a wiggle-tail has to wiggle a whole heap before he gits into the toad class. An' God ain't recognizin' any human toad what won't wiggle his brains. He may be some human, but he'll always lack a whole heap of bein' a man.'

" 'I don't reckon I fit in the man class,' says Sob, 'but yer can bank on me bein' right here when the horn blows.'

" 'Listen, Sob,' says pard. 'Sling one of them canteens over yer shoulder an' make yer git-away. Make a straight break fer the nearest point where yer kin git help. I'll be here when yer gits back. I kin hold these ginks off. If yer don't git through, I'll be here jest the same, an' I'll be as well off as you will. It's a long shot, but it's the only chanst we've got, so git a move on.'

"An' Sob stands up an' looks at him. Looks at him long an' hard. An' the tears comes into his eyes an' makes streaks down his dust-covered cheeks. An' he gulps a time er two, but he can't say nothin'. Then he picks up the canteen an' takes a drink. An' he lays his thirty-eight on the rock along side of pard, an' takes off his cartridge belt. An' then he swallers real hard agin, an' says:

" 'Pard, yer is plumb white. I'll jest leave my gun an' canteen here till I prospects a bit an' sees how the greasers is located. If the way is clear I'll come back an' say so long.'

"An' he turns an' shins up the wall, an'—well, if ever a man knowin'ly butts into hell-fire, Sob did. Without water, without arms, he headed straight into the desert. Into the very heart of the sand-storm, he plunged. But he put his thinker into his work, an' headed with the wind.

"For six hours he struggles with the whirling, cutting, chokin' mass. An' fer more than twenty-four hours he had had nothin' to eat, an' mighty little water. He covers many miles durin' them six hours, and every minute of 'em was a hell. An' then the storm stops, an' he struggles on, an' on. The sun shines hot. The bright glare of the white sand seems to be a-burnin' an' a-borin' into his eyes. His throat an' mouth swells till he can't even swaller.

"He ain't got no idea how long he keeps movin' ahead. He sees the town—a few shacks scattered indiscrimernate-like on the sand. An' then everything goes red with him. He wabbles like a drunk, an' tries to steer fer where he had seen the shacks. An' he falls, an' gits up agin, an' agin. An' then he jest has ter crawl, an' drag hisself along.

"An' then all goes black aroun' him. He don't know how long he lays there. But after a spell he comes to, an' he kin see a little in a blurred kind of way, an' the shacks is only a little ways ahead, an' he struggles to his feet, an' kind of gropes his way to the nearest shack, an' feels his way along the wall till he strikes the corner, an'—falls over me.

"THAT was his story when he comes to his senses an' kin talk some. We doctors him an' he comes up like a race hoss. We gits a kind of outfit together an' puts him in a light wagon, an' about twenty of us fellers makes lively tracks fer the old Soda Lake Range. We takes the Mex. outfit by surprise an' busted 'em entire. An' then we goes to git pard.

"He was there—there in the hole in the rock. The greasers could of got him if they had knowed his condition, fer he was down an' out—plumb nuts. His arm was swelled an' all to the bad. The fever was settin' fire to his blood, an' it didn't take two looks to tell us he was ticketed an' on the fast express fer the long, long journey. He didn't know Sob, an' in fact, Sob was some nutty hisself. We carries pard down to the water-hole an' done all we could, but 'twan't no use. He was ravin' an' talkin' jerky like, an' I was sittin' up with him an' fannin' him, about midnight.

"Sob was there, too—you couldn't keep him away. All at once pard comes out of it—everything seems to clear up fer him, an' he notices Sob, an' smiles. An' then he speaks jest as clear an' jest as straight as ever he done. An' he praises Sob fer his onselfishness, an' fer his tryin' fer to help him. But he realizes, an' tells Sob so, that his time has come. An' Sob jest sets an' looks,

an' nods. He seems to have gone more nutty at the same time his pard has come right. An' he tells Sob how he is goin' to pass in his chips, an' says:

" 'Them fellers what does the preachin' business an' tells us sinners how to live an' when to pungle, an' sich like, tells us as how there is, somewheres, a water-hole all surrounded by trees, an' tall grass, where we desert tramps kin prospect at will, an' where there ain't goin' to be no sand-storms, an' no heat, an' no dyin' of thirst an' sich like. But take it from me, pard, that water-hole ain't goin' to be over-crowded if only them as is plumb onselfish gits a look in there.

" 'I opines, partner, that when we gits in line at the great final round-up, the Boss of the Ranch Eternal ain't goin' to pick out a whole heap of us what has the brand of genuine brother-like love stamped onto us. Lots of us has done some good, an' some has done heaps of good between acts like, but there ain't many of us what ain't jumped some feller's claim in the hills, while we was steerin' down trail to the desert.

" 'We're all livin' in a little lean-to what has took us all our lives to build, an' most of the time it's dark-like in our shack. An' we sets in our little private wickiup that ain't got no light but a taller dip, an' at best don't throw no light but a little ways; an' we sets an' figgers, an' figgers as to how we kin git our neighbor down to his white alley, an' then raise him out of the pot, so as to build a el to our lean-to, or buy another taller dip, so as we kin see better to do some more figgerin'. Or we meets a man er two what seems white, er we sees a vision of what might of been when we runs across a good woman—er we makes a strike in the hills, but—well, them's only incerdents.

" 'An' at last we crawls into our little wickiup fer the long, long rest, an' the taller dip sputters an' melts down to a gob of grease in the block of wood where oncet it stood up straight in, an' the shadders begins to thicken in the hut, an' the night winds blows cold through the chinks 'tween the timbers, an' we rolls up in our blankets an'—well, mebby we sees a vision in our dreams of that water-hole, an' tall trees, an' green grass an' all that, an' we wonders if it kin be real, er if it is only a mirage, an' then we knows we is due to sleep, an' we says good night, an'—well, tomorrow 'aint come yet, so we don't know—we don't know, we don't know.'

"An' he breathes a long sigh, an' smiles at Sob, an' he has gone to the water-hole what is on the unknown side of eternity."

AND then Measles gets up and goes out to see if the burros are all right, 'cause he says there seems to be a sort of fog on the desert. And Old Wade and I lays and looks up at the stars, and I wonder if the water-hole isn't located out there in space somewhere where there is plenty of room for all, and where each may have his own little wickiup, and have the company of that good woman we each know, throughout all time. And I asked Wade how Sob was cured of the sob habit. And Old Wade pokes the fire a little, and says:

"When pard died, Sob went plumb nutty. An' he grabs a knife an' starts in to carve up the camp. I sees him headin' fer me an' tries to side-step him. But he seems to have picked me out for his meat. He rushes me, an' makes a lunge at me with his knife. I don't want to gun him, so I clubs my thirty-eight an' when he makes another rush I cracks him on the bean.

"He goes down in a heap an' we couldn't bring him to. So we packs him as comfortable as we could in the wagon an' rushes him to Daggett. We afterward takes him to Los Angeles to a knife doctor who chopped his head-piece an' found out his old trouble to be from some bone pressin' on his brain. They fixes him up, somehow, an' when he comes out, he comes out without his sob attachment."

And Measles comes in from communing with the burros, and says that he reckoned that booze was poor company for a man unless he was looking for trouble. Anyhow he was willing to speak up and say that Sob wasn't the easy mark he had thought him to be. And Old Wade says:

"Son, if yer is lookin' to play the game of life through workin' of easy marks, an' if yer ever expects to amount to more'n a gob of grease, thinkin' that way, fergit it! No man never pans out more dust than there is in the dirt, an' if he don't earn it, he don't git it."

Which I allow is some parable.

Rotorua Rex

A Three-part Story

Part II

by J. Allan Dunn

Author of "The Hazard of the Hills," "The Pearl," etc.

The First Part of the Story Quickly Retold in Story Form

VANCE LOUDON was foot-loose, fancy-free and twenty-eight. Ramble fever and a fast diminishing eight-hundred-dollar patrimony had brought him from the United States to Honolulu. The spell of the South Seas laid compelling hands upon his spirit as he watched the schooner *Manawa* loading for the Madgeburg Islands. The Scotch skipper offered to take him along as passenger.

"There's three more will be gangin' wi' us. I'll take ye along for a matter o' two hundred dollars."

Vance brought out his roll.

Rotorua was hereditary chief of Hapai and the Magdeburg group. He was six feet two inches of royal dusky height and more than half that distance waist measure. For only a week had Rotorua been an absolute monarch—due to the untimely death by sun-stroke of the resident British commissioner.

Three white people remained on the island—Serena Hargrave, daughter of the dead commissioner, Mrs. Gower, her aunt, and a British sergeant.

When the royal presence was well saturated by public approval and gin, the sergeant appeared.

"Miss 'Argrave harsks a haudience," he announced.

Rotorua spoke English fairly well and he mustered his cloudy wits and achieved a hasty dignity.

"All-a-right. How soon bimeby she come?"

"Right horff. There's a schooner houtside, 'cading up the 'arbor."

"'Ell's a going to be popping 'ere before long," added the sergeant to himself.

It was the *Manawa*, the first ship, except a gunboat and one tramp steamer, to appear during two years.

Vance Loudon had by this time had plenty of opportunity for sizing up his fellow passengers. Hawks they were—hawks of hazard. Hapai, rich in sandalwood and ebony, pearl, tortoise-shell and copra was the lure. Jim Edler and Phil Griffin were openly after a sandalwood concession. Brewster, lean and cynical, said nothing of his business.

A canoe with Toruki, the king's nephew, in command came alongside the schooner.

"Come aboard Toruki," invited Captain Henderson. "Mac, break out some liquor. We'll keep the rest of them off till we ken how matters stand."

The captain and three adventurers escorted Toruki below. Loudon stayed on deck. Suddenly through an open skylight there came to Loudon's ears a babble of Melanesian, followed by broad Scotch. It was Toruki; the skipper translating.

"He says a tramp freighter bought up the stuff on hand, all except this season's copra," came the skipper's words. "And that the commissioner took the money in gold and notes as payment. Something between nine and ten thousand pounds."

Vance Loudon bent for better hearing.

"Ask him where the money is now," Brewster continued.

"There's a lassie, Toruki says. They call her Leaf of Heaven. And her aunt, a widow lady, and a sergeant. But there's no guard. And no wireless nearer than New Mecklenburg, seventy miles south. But we must go easy. Rotorua's loyal, ye ken."

"It would be a kindly and no doubt a well-appreciated thing to offer the lady and her aunt the opportunity of removing those funds to a more secure place," said Brewster.

"How about young Loudon?" asked Edler.

"He can stay and keep the sergeant company. He need not know the *Manawa* is not staying over. Get him off on a hunting trip."

Vance slipped noiselessly to the rail.

He held the winning hand so far. All he had to do was to seem unconscious of the plot and warn the two women. But the others kept a close watch.

Rotorua was waiting ashore, regally attired to receive expected gifts from the schooner's passengers. Brewster's offering was enshrined within a polished box—poker chips. Rotorua smiled appreciatingly.

"Eyah! Poker! Bimeby we play."

Loudon offered a shining hunting ax.

"What do you want?" the king asked generously.

Loudon said he would like some hunting. This,

he thought to himself, would give him a chance to get his rifle and shotgun ashore.

That evening after the return to the schooner, Loudon dropped gingerly over the schooner's side; swam ashore and told Mrs. Gower and Serena Hargrave of their danger. After being dismissed with a very impersonal "good night" and "thank you so much," he swam noiselessly back. No one on board had suspected his absence.

Next day the skipper and his four passengers went ashore to attend a banquet and *souruka* dance given by the king. Loudon took his fire-arms along, ostensibly for the projected hunting trip.

It was after the feast when most of the natives were asleep that a shot rang out, followed by a woman's scream. Vance grabbed his rifle and dashed to the commissioner's bungalow.

First he saw the sergeant in the grip of two of Toruki's followers. Then Mrs. Gower and beside her Serena Hargrave, with a shotgun in her hands.

Toruki confronted her, his men grouped behind him brandishing spears. The mob surged on. Loudon fighting desperately found himself powerless.

Then came shouts and a deep gutteral "Pau." A mighty bulk had broken through the mob and sent Toruki spinning aside with the thrust of one great arm. It was Rotorua. Toruki and his men retreated sulkily before the thunders of the king. It was evident that Rotorua was loyal.

Serena Hargarve later showed Loudon the money and precious pearls.

"If I were you," said he, "I should bury them. Any one could get into that old safe with a can-opener."

"I shall ask Rotorua for a guard tomorrow," replied the girl. "And you should be able to get in touch with the commissioner at New Mecklenburg within a few days."

The king was holding the promised poker party. The Scotch skipper turned to Loudon and said—

"We're leavin' the morn and ye'll ha' to forego that shootin'."

"I do hate losing that trip with the king," said Vance.

"I give up along that trip," remarked Rotorua. "That fellow Toruki, he one —— trouble fellow. He go along the mountain with plenty his people. Bimeby, when you go, I go along mountain and bring back plenty head."

"Come on king, let's christen the poker chips. We sail early and the night's getting old," said Brewster.

The game ran high. The king proved adept but steadily lost. Then came a big hand. Brewster showed down a winning hand. The king's enormous paw shot out and covered the stakes. Brewster's face went livid and his hand slid to his belt. Rotorua swept Edler crashing to the wall and grasped Brewster and plucked him from his seat. Then he spread out the cards and picked out an extra ace—proof of Brewster's crooked play.

"Let's get out o' this," said the skipper.

The king turned to Loudon.

"You all right. You white man. No cheat."

Loudon returned with the others to the schooner.

"I'm not through with that fat fool yet," snarled Brewster, later.

"We'll ha' to mak' the best of a bad bargain," said the skipper. "Tide'll serve in an hour. I'll get Mac to serve us coffee. Ye'll join us, Mr. Loudon?"

"I'll be glad to have a cup of coffee," answered Vance.

As Loudon lowered his cup he saw the rest with their cups arrested half-way to their mouths. He fought against an oblivion that swiftly rushed over him. He tried to rise but his legs were heavy as lead. His head dropped on his chest and he slumped down on the cabin table.

CHAPTER IX

TRAPPED

WHEN Loudon regained consciousness he found himself lying on a strange bunk in a small cabin. His head ached with a dull persistency, his mouth tasted as if it was lined with brass and a general paralysis held his entire body in thrall. His senses came back slowly with remembrance.

The schooner was at sea. It was hard at first to distinguish between the pitch of the vessel and the racking of his brain but presently he heard the unmistakable swash of the sea outside his cabin and the pounding thumps as the bows smashed into the waves. This had been the supercargo's dingy cubby-hole, his own spacious cabin was doubtless occupied by one of the Hawks.

The coffee had been drugged and he was a prisoner. There was no getting through the port-hole above him, spattered with the rain of a sudden squall. What a fool he had been to think that the Hawks would have given up their attempt on the money so easily. And now they held the grudge of revenge against Rotorua. What deviltry were they up to? And what were they going to do with him?

The effort at continued thought was too much for his drugged senses and he dropped back among the grimy blankets with a groan. He could hear the swift patter of feet on the deck above him and voices in the cabin. Sensation came slowly stealing back to his body. He could move his hands, feebly, then his arms. An attempt to sit up resulted in failure. Creepingly he explored his belt and then the fob-pocket into which he had slipped the pearl. That was gone and so were his knife and pistol.

The door opened and a grinning brown face appeared, that of Billy-Boy, the cook. In his hand he held a glass in which half a lime floated.

"*Kapitani*, he send you this. You betteh

now? My word, you plenty long time sick. *Kapitani* he say you drink this, bimeby he come."

Loudon shook his head.

"Put it down," he said. "Where are we, Billy-Boy? At sea?"

"We go along Hapai way." There was a step outside and the kanaka vanished as Henderson entered the cabin, followed by Brewster.

"Tak' the drink, laddie," said the skipper. "There's nothing wrang wi' it. I'll split it wi' ye if ye like. It'll brace ye up a bit whiles we talk turkey to ye."

As Loudon refused, Henderson took up the ricky and drained it.

"Ther's no fule like a young fule," he said. "I like ye and I've put in a strong word for ye this mornin' but ye're hot-heidêd and too swift to mix in wi' the affairs o' others. Mr. Brewster here wants a word wi' ye."

"The skipper is right, Loudon. You've butted into our concerns and now you've got to suffer the consequences. In the first place you listened through that open skylight when we were talking with Toruki and then you get soft over a pretty face and blab out all you know. You've had some hand in the disappearance of Tomi and you've generally queered our game.

"If you had had sense enough to keep your mouth shut you might have spent a few weeks on the island shooting and no harm to you. Now you know too much and you'll not interfere with us again.

"We aren't through with Hapai and our plans will go along till we get what we want.

"One thing we want is your cabin for the accommodation of lady guests. That brings you in Mac's cabin and makes you more of a nuisance than ever. I've got my own ideas as to what to do with nuisances but the skipper here is tender-hearted. So you stay in this cabin and keep quiet.

"First time you start anything we'll wrap you up so you can't stir. Later on we'll put you ashore on a nice, quiet little atoll and leave you to think it over. If you behave yourself we might leave you some company. I ain't quite made up my mind about that. Depends upon how good that company turns out to be," he grinned.

Loudon knew what he meant. He was to be marooned, if their plans worked out, and, with him, the girl and her aunt, unless the former proved complacent enough to tolerate Brewster's attentions.

But how were they going to carry out their schemes with Rotorua against them? The thought leaped in answer. Toruki was the next in line of succession. Toruki hated the king all the more since he had been humiliated by him. He had fled to the windward side of the island with those who followed him and believed in his spiritual supremacy as *tindalo*.

Edler had deftly questioned the king as to the number of rifles and cartridges he possessed. He had found out where Toruki had gone—to Rapanui. Toruki hated the white women. The Hawks and Henderson were going to offer their services to Toruki to foment a rebellion that would set him on the throne and give them the money in the commissioner's safe and Rotorua's big pearl.

As for the two Englishwomen, if Rotorua should be taken unawares and conquered, their fate would lie between Toruki and Brewster. His jaw set as he worked out the crafty scheme while his eyes looked unblinkingly into Brewster's. Then he sensed that the latter was talking.

"Well, what do you say? Tell us where the cash is. We'll find out anyhow but we may be pressed for time. Come through and things'll be a lot easier for you. I'll send back after you, for one thing."

Loudon prayed silently that the girl had taken his advice and buried the money and the pearls. Still that might only make it worse for them.

"Where is it?" asked Brewster impatiently.

"Before you find out from me, Brewster," said Loudon, "you'll have arrived in a place where they have been expecting you and your blackguard companions for a long time."

The gambler thrust a threatening face into the bunk.

"The —— you say."

"Exactly that."

He laughed at his inquisitor. Brewster brutally cuffed him about the face and swung out of the cabin.

Henderson lingered.

"Ye're a bit daft yet wi' the chloral," he said. "Ye'll come to your senses after a while. I'm not for harsh measures, Mr. Loudon, but it'll no pay ye to be stubborn i' this affair. Use your brains to save your skin whiles it's sound."

The door slammed and was fastened from

the outside. Presently he managed to raise himself on one arm so that he could look out of the port-hole. The schooner was smashing along through the tail of the squall, reaching at her best gate. The spume flew thick and his horizon was limited to hills of foam-streaked water with once in a while the glimpse of the tumbling horizon. A hoarse order sounded, followed by the tramp of naked feet as the sailors swung to the sheets. The schooner came up, staggered, pitched wildly and fell off on the new tack.

Now he could see the land. The squall was easing. The island rose abruptly from the deep. Unscalable cliffs down which torrents streamed like gray beards, silent valleys of woods in between, high peaks chiseled and gouged by the constant buffet of the trades, arrows of sunlight shot through the wrack of the squall and splintered on the crags, the windward side of Hapai.

They were on their way to Rapanui and a junction with Toruki while Rotorua thought them speeding out to sea as he leisurely prepared to send a force after the rebellious chief. The women thinking their peril ended when it had just begun and he cooped up powerless to aid them.

THE *Manawa* slashed on, tacked alternately seaward and landward until a bold, serrated headland came into view, sheltering a crescent beach. They were still outside the lagoon but Loudon saw the reefgate marked by spouting breakers for which they headed up.

Soon they were in quieter waters. A group of natives ran down the sand and Loudon heard Henderson shouting to them through his megaphone. A tall man joined them. It was Toruki. Something blocked the port-hole, the descending bulk of the whale-boat from the davits. It dropped into the water, one native clinging to the fall. In a few minutes he saw it speeding shoreward with the three Hawks and Henderson in stern and bows, the sun gleaming on their rifles.

The schooner was equipped with two dozen Lee-Enfields and there were perhaps half that many pistols of various makes and calibers. Rotorua had twenty rifles against the twenty-four. These were probably those of the deserting guard, Loudon reflected. And the cartridges were in the *lele* house, the magazine close to the palace. The sergeant had a rifle. His own was there with his shotgun. Miss Hargrave had a shotgun and there were some other weapons on the walls of the commissioner's office. The odds were even—if he could warn them in time.

They were having a powwow on the beach. It broke up with Toruki coming off to the schooner. Bottles were opened and Loudon, crouching by his door, heard snatches of the talk which was translated back and forth by Henderson for the benefit of the rest.

The schooner was to sail back after dusk and run into the mouth of a mangrove-hidden creek. Then Toruki's warriors, supplemented by the white men, would burst upon the settlement. The magazine would be captured first and resistance limited to the few rounds on hand. Rotorua was to be killed and Toruki announced as king. The white men were to have the money and the loot of the bungalow.

A dispute started over the fate of the women. Toruki was adamant. They were to come to him. They had mocked at him in the sight of his followers. It was necessary for him to deal with them as he would.

"I'll no stand for it," said Henderson after he had interpreted. "Men, ye dinna ken what it means. Toruki 'll have his will of them and then it's the ovens for what's left of them, dead or alive. I'll no be having that on my conscience. If ye knew what I know——"

"Then throw your cursed conscience overboard," said Edler. "We don't want the women. There's only two of them and one of them too old and tough for even Toruki. They'll be a nuisance and cause trouble. Let Toruki handle them and give him the dude in the cabin into the bargain."

"'Tis worse than murder and I'll not stand for it."

"Time enough to settle that," broke in Brewster. "Ask Toruki if any of his men can shoot and what other arms they have."

The consultation ended by the boat returning to the shore, two cases of liquor piled in the stern. Soon the bottles were passing. Toruki's men had been cooking and an oven was opened. The shadows of the shore palms crept down the beach and the men, white and natives, both, relaxed and appeared to sleep.

Loudon lay down and summoned every faculty to consider the problem. That

Toruki would have his way concerning the women seemed certain. With the exception of Henderson, the rest seemed callous as to their fate as long as their own tracks were covered.

This was the raw side of the world and men were apt to be far less than divine, very little more than barely human. To leave women to such a horror as Toruki seemed an incredible thing to contemplate, much less believe, but Loudon knew from reliable sources how lightly life was valued in these latitudes compared to the lust for money or revenge. Somehow or other he had to get away and reach the settlement before the surprise broke.

An hour or two—he had no means of accurately judging the time—would see the abrupt curtain of tropic dusk, that knows no twilight, dropped, and the schooner setting out on her mission. How long they had taken to make the trip was an easy calculation. Twelve hours would cover it. Undoubtedly the schooner had stood far out to sea to deceive any watch that Rotorua might have set to see his orders were obeyed. Going back would be a shorter trip. They would hold along the reef, reaching the creek and making quick time on land to arrive before dawn.

He lay quietly for a while until he had evolved the only feasible or possible plan. They were anxious minutes but they were necessary to bring back his strength at the urge of his will. Everything depended upon the slumber of the men ashore. In the tropical afternoon, sated with food and heavy liquor, the natives would be almost certain to succumb to drowsiness and the white men had been up all night. They had probably not napped yet for the excitement of reaching Rapanui. It was the only way out.

The supercargo had gone ashore to share in the feast. Four natives had rowed and one steered in place of Tomi. That left only two of the native crew of eight aboard, envious at being kept out of the food and liquor.

If only one of them would come below! Loudon concentrated his mind on the wish, mainly to counteract the wear and tear of uncertainty. There was liquor in the cabin. Surely one of the kanaka boys would think of that sooner or later.

His straining ear caught the light scuffle of feet on the companionway. He started to groan. There was the clink of a bottle that paused abruptly and he moaned pitifully. The bolt of his cabin squeaked, the lock turned and a face peered in.

"You *pirikia?*"

Loudon tossed on his bunk with closed eyes and muttered. The curious, half-afraid native crept toward him.

"What matter you?"

Loudon opened his eyes.

"You boy," he gasped, simulating anguish as he twisted his features. "You bring me drink. Bimeby me *mate.* Bimeby my *aitu* (spirit) walk along you."

The shallow-pated kanaka winced at the mention of the word. He did not want a white man's ghost haunting him. He hesitated and Loudon writhed on his blankets.

"*Wiki-wiki* (quick) you," he gasped.

"What you give?"

"There is *tala* in my cabin. I hide. You bring one drink, I tell you."

Tala meant money, the most modern and powerful god in Melanesia. The native crept softly away and returned with a bottle of squareface and a glass. He poured a generous measure and held it out toward Loudon.

"Help me," said Loudon, raising his head and letting it fall again in exhaustion.

The native slid one hand and arm under the head of the groaning man and bent forward with the glass. Loudon sent the crook of his elbow round the kanaka's neck in a half-Nelson and brought up his right fist in a short-arm jolt with every ounce of force he possessed. The native grunted and slid to the floor. Loudon bounded from the bunk and tore off the man's loin-cloth, trussing him with the long strip. He darted into the cabin and entered the skipper's quarters. The small arms were kept there. If the chest was open. . . .

It was. His own automatic was there with some other pistols. For once Henderson had been careless. With a gun the rest was easier. He had hardly hoped for so effective a weapon. Back in the supercargo's cabin the boy was coming to, only to find a cold muzzle clapped to his head.

"Now, you call other boy down for drink," said Loudon. "Not too loud."

The trick worked. The second native came swiftly down the ladder until he felt the gun pressing his stomach. Loudon's caution stopped his yell. Ashen with fear, he descended slowly and stood with extended arms against the cabin wall, putting

them down at command while Loudon bound him securely. Then he gagged both of them and locked them in the supercargo's room as a surprise for the Hawks on their return.

He wanted to find the ammunition and drop it overboard but he did not know exactly where to look for it and time was precious. But he dumped the remaining pistols through a port-hole on the sea side. They had taken the rifles ashore. His own automatic he belted about him, took a drink from one of the bottles, crammed his mouth and pockets with the food-scraps that were in the galley and crept out on deck.

He crawled to the rail and looked over at the tide. It was still flooding. His eyes lit up as he saw the ragged top of a coco-palm, brought in through the reef entrance by the tide. It was being slowly carried by the current toward the shore. A long spit of sand made up one horn of the little bay and piled-up wash showed where the tree crown would land. It was drifting less than fifty yards from the schooner.

Wriggling across the deck, Loudon reached the stern and inched over the rail. The lowered but unfurled mainsail protected him as he dropped quietly into the water. Much of his ache had left him with action and the water revived him and helped to clear his head. He swam under the surface until he reached the palm-top, thrusting an arm among its branches and screening his head and shoulders under the fronds as he assisted its progress toward the spit.

He had nearly arrived when he heard sounds on the beach. The tree grounded and he crawled out on the farther side of the spit and, bent double, ran, hidden by pandanus scrub. Once he stopped and peered through the stiff leaves. Toruki and his followers were grouped ready for embarkation.

Loudon estimated them at close to a hundred. From the talk in the cabin he knew that Toruki was confident that many more would join him, once he announced rebellion. As *tindalo* his prestige was little less than that of the king. The commissioner had suppressed the office but the superstitious natives were still under the ban of priesthood. Most of the visitors would have returned home since the king's trip had been given up. He did not know how many men Rotorua could rally.

The whale-boat would have to make several trips. That would give him time to get well into the bush. He had landed but the chances were still desperate. He could not expect the quartering moon until close to midnight. The way along the shore was too long and from what he had glimpsed of the coast there would be impassable gaps where the precipices rose sheer from the water.

He had to cross the island.

Had he known more of the volcanic islands of the South Seas with their windward cliffs worn smooth by centuries of pounding gales, the leeward side rank with tangled brush and thick forest, his heart would have failed him but he thought he saw the prospect of a pass between two lofting peaks and the sinking sun told him that Rapanui must be nearly opposite the settlement. He had to set his path before the light failed and climb as best he could by starlight until the slim moon helped.

CHAPTER X

THE PASS

THE EFFECT of the knockout drops was wearing off. Loudon had been born among mountains and had the mountaineer's instinct. He heard the trickle of a watercourse and found it, scrambling amid pools and rapids to hide his track, should he be followed. Working desperately, he wormed his way up to the first ridge.

A shouting hubbub came from the lagoon. He was hidden but his escape had been discovered. The whale-boat came driving back to the shore and a dozen natives spread along the sand, looking for his tracks. Some of them came directly toward the spit. He had kept close to tide-edge and the mounting flood had washed away the marks.

Every moment of daylight was precious and he turned from the pursuit, plunging into a dense mass of verdure. He crossed a bushpath and increased his speed as long as it led upward. It ended in a ravine where a fall tumbled over the heading wall and a grass hut stood among a grove of breadfruit. This he avoided and climbed on, munching at the food he had brought.

The last rays of the sun, lingering on the higher peaks, found him clinging and creeping along a dizzy goatpath, his hands and knees raw, forcing himself on to where the pass began to open far above him. Clouds

gathered on the crests, mountains piled on mountains, glooming and glowing as the sun dropped. A strong wind blew through the pass and divided the forest below him. The gusts wrestled and tore at him as he clung to precarious holds. Once a torrent of rain fell with a rush and drenched him.

Then darkness swooped down. Through the cloud masses the stars shone with cold brilliance. He stumbled on, edging into the gap, fighting with the wind that poured through the cleft, its sudden gusts forcing him to rest, flattened against the mountain wall, thankful for grips on straggling bushes, faint and giddy, but steady of purpose.

The schooner had long ago put out to sea. He had seen her creeping along the reef. Now, with lights out, guided by the phosphorescence and the sound of the clamorous reef surge, she was racing with him, foot by foot, freighted with death and disaster.

He felt sure of making the pass if he could only win to it. Toruki and his men must have come through the gap. Once in the cleft, he could surely find the trail leading to the settlement and, with good fortune, follow it. The wind roared blusteringly at him, plucking his clothes, his hair, playing with him, friendly one moment, holding him firm against the slippery cliff, the next, threatening to fling him headlong into the gulf.

Had it blown against him instead of from behind he would never have compassed the climb. At last the gale literally swept him through the notch as the segment of a moon rose over the round of the sea and he gazed down by blurry ridge and indistinct, plumy treetops to where the unseen settlement lay sleeping.

Ever afterward the trip held for him the hazy memories of a nightmare. He stumbled down the clattering beds of dead torrents, the stones sliding with him, or waded thigh deep through swirling streams. At times he hung by his hands and dropped the smaller precipices. What trail there was he soon lost.

His clothes were in tatters, his body bruised, his face whipped by vines. For what seemed hours he blundered about in a wood where the brush rose armpit high and he ran blindly into tree stems and tripped over lianas while hanging loops caught him beneath the chin. He came out upon steep slopes where the long piriz grass grew in a natural thatch, slippery as glacier ice, crossed an old dyke of lava that finished his shoes and made his way at last to a cinder cone that stood out of the guava scrub back of the commissioner's bungalow.

As he plunged up its slope to the rim, the breath coming from his overtaxed lungs in great sobs, he saw beyond the sea, now deserted by the moon path, the faint tremble of the sky that heralded the dawn. The stars were wavering like lamps with the wicks turned too low. The moon had curved behind the mountains.

Within the half-hour, the natives would be coming out for their morning swim. Toruki must be close at hand. Loudon braced himself for the final sprint. Ahead lay half a mile of guava scrub. Beyond that, the bungalow garden.

Leaves and twigs and the pale golden globes of the fruit slowly took form as he crashed along but the sun was still a-swim below the horizon and it was yet dark when he hurdled the last bush and emerged upon the lawn where the girl had defied Toruki. He dared not risk a shout. The outer blinds were closed and fastened from within.

He rattled the handle of the door desperately, planning some comparatively quiet way to awaken the inmate. Suddenly he felt the grip of a hand on the inside handle and released his own. The door opened to a chain.

"Quick," he panted, "it's Loudon. Toruki's on the way!"

The sergeant stood before him, rifle in hand, dressed save for his coat. He grasped the situation instantly.

"Come hin, sir," he said. "I'll wake the ladies if you'll get the guns out hof the hoffice. Your stuff his hin there. I was sleepin' there hon a sofa."

"Hurry, man," cried Loudon as he turned into the office.

A tiny night-lamp, well shaded, gave him light enough to get the weapons from the wall rack. Two rifles, a shotgun and a revolver. His own guns stood cased on the floor beside his kit-bag.

He closed the door and swiftly made a change from his tattered linen into his suit of stout hunting khaki and filled his pockets with cartridges, loading both his own guns after putting them together. Boxes of other cartridges for the late commissioner's weapons were on a shelf and he took them down and broke them open.

The sergeant opened the door. Outside

stood Serena Hargrave and her aunt, the girl fully dressed in short skirt and linen blouse with knee-high boots, her own shotgun with her. Mrs. Gower had on a traveling suit and clutched a tiny pistol in one hand.

Loudon silently opened the shutters. Far up the mountains a peak glowed sulfur yellow—the dusk was rapidly dissolving.

"Take cartridges and hurry," he said. "We haven't a second to lose."

The girl took a soft leather bag from her bosom and handed it to Loudon.

"Will you put this in one of your pockets," she said. "I might lose them. They are the pearls. We took your advice and buried the money last night in the scrub."

She caught up a canvas game-bag and filled it with the cartridges that Loudon had broken out, handing it to the sergeant who slung it across his shoulder. Mrs. Gower took one of the four rifles, the sergeant another, strapping the revolver about his waist while Serena picked up the second shotgun.

Neither of the women showed the slightest sign of panic. They might have been starting off upon a hunting trip as they swiftly crossed the lawn and entered the scrub.

"We must get in touch with Rotorua," said Loudon. "If we can warn him in time we'll be fairly well-armed. Surprise is the master play in this revolution."

The sulfur glow was flowing fast down the distant crests. Toruki must be hard upon the settlement. He would leave the bungalow to the white men for the while until he stormed the palace, Loudon figured. And the whites would not travel as fast as the islanders.

The guava scrub began to thin out as they mounted a rise. Between them and the settlement now lay a belt of dense forest that ran far back into the hills along a spur that joined a labyrinth of gulfs and buttresses jutting from the main range. It was hard going but they did not dare expose themselves nearer the beach. The women stuck to it gamely, burdened as they were by the firearms.

They were fairly in the fringe of the forest when an explosion shattered the quiet of the dawn. As if at a signal, the sky lightened with the swift illumination of a stage effect. A myriad birds rose screaming from the trees. Yells of triumph broke out and blended with cries of consternation and surprise, followed by the crack of rifle fire.

"Blown hup the magazine," said the sergeant. "Foxy, that, sir."

Rotorua was now left with only a few rounds for the rifles of the dismantled guard and these were being fired rapidly. Loudon peered back through the trees to where he could see the bungalow and a strip of the lawn behind it. The door they had closed behind them burst open before the exit of three men. It was light enough to recognize them as the Hawks, arrived too late to swoop upon the covey that was already flushed. They ran stooping about the garden, looking for the direction of the flight. The lean figure of the skipper called to them and they reentered the house.

"They have found the safe," said Loudon. "That will give us a better start."

"Unless," said the girl, "they happen to have a can-opener with them."

He stared at her before he remembered his own remark and laughed. Serena had a sense of humor. It made her seem more human somehow.

The sound of scattered shots and shouting seemed to be drawing closer. The king was making a running fight of it and he was coming their way.

A bullet whined overhead, finding a clear path through an aisle of the forest. They could see figures darting between the trees, seeking cover and firing back at the pursuit. Only a few bore rifles and now and then one of the weapons was tossed away.

"They are out of ammunition," said Loudon. "But they mustn't throw away their guns. They are only arming the enemy. Where is Rotorua? We must cover their retreat. You ladies get back, we'll follow. Give Bristol your rifle, Mrs. Gower. You can take the shotgun. They may be useful at close quarters."

"Give it to me, Bristol," said the girl. "Are you a good shot, Mr. Loudon?"

"Not particularly, with a rifle."

"Well, I am. Aunt can go on if she wants to."

She stood by the thick trunk of a *rau* tree handling the weapon Bristol gave her with cool dexterity. Loudon flashed her a look of admiration.

"I couldn't hit a barn," said Mrs. Gower. "But I can load."

Her head was up, her parroty nose a-sniff, her eyes glittering.

"Good old sport," muttered Loudon. "No wonder the British hold their frontiers."

THE natives were beginning to drift rapidly toward and past them, their eyeballs gleaming in the dusk of the forest as the girl shouted to them in their own tongue to keep their rifles. Some carried javelins but the majority were defenseless.

The little band of whites held their fire until they could distinguish friend from foe. Toruki's force seemed well supplied with cartridges, for the fusillade was heavy though the aim was poor. Most of the bullets buried themselves in the higher branches and every wasted shot helped to reduce the odds.

Loudon saw the great bulk of a man retreating slowly. It was Rotorua, backing through the brush like a gorilla, roaring defiance to Toruki and trying to rally his men. A red stream poured down his back from a wound that had creased his shoulder. Loudon's gift-ax was slung across his back. He had no rifle but carried a sheaf of throwing-spears in his left hand and one poised in his right.

The pursuers began to show up, firing from cover. There was no sign of the men from the schooner and Loudon imagined them still working over the empty safe or looting the bungalow in a vain attempt to locate the treasure. He shouted to the king just as the latter hurled a javelin that flashed through a stray sunbeam and found its mark. A native leaped high from the undergrowth, shrilling his death wail, transfixed by the spear. Rotorua swung toward Loudon.

"*Eyah*, white man," he called and his arm shot upward with a ready javelin.

The girl shouted to him as Loudon called out that they were friends. The monarch's fiery eyes changed from suspicion to surprise and then to joy.

"Give me a gun," he cried.

It was Mrs. Gower who handed him a freshly loaded rifle and he gave her a look that was ludicrous in its inquiry. He jumped behind the next tree to Loudon as a spear whizzed past.

"They blow up cartridge," he said. "Catch us asleep. My guns no good now, only to keep. Those —— Toruki fellows come along too quick. No time. Suppose I have gun and spear ——, I run them into sea. Where you come from?"

Loudon hastily explained. The king bellowed to his men and they started to run for safety. The enemy was showing in force and the rain of bullets increased. Arrows flickered by and spears sank into the trees. The position was untenable.

"Where to?" asked Loudon.

"We go along *tapu* place, up mountain. That good place to fight."

"All right, king, we'll cover the retreat."

A group of Toruki's men leaped into an opening with exultant yells that changed in tune before the withering fire that was concentrated upon them. A weird figure, wigged with long gray hair and girdled with a flowing fringe of black tresses, sprang from a clump and urged them forward. It was Toruki, in his sorcerer's war costume of gray beards and the hair of dead women, half of his demoniac face smeared with red ocher, a smoking rifle in his hand.

The little rear-guard fell back through the thick brush, bent for concealment and Toruki came on warily. The sight of Loudon had evidently bothered him and he spread out his men fan fashion, pushing cautiously forward.

The forest became more open and the ground crested to a ridge. They were nearing the verge of the woods. A backward glance showed Loudon the king's men racing along a naked spiny spur and grouping before some obstacle.

"Bad place," grunted Rotorua. "All same like edge of spear. Take time cross. Better we hurry."

The pursuit had slowed up a little with the lessening trees and they made a run for it. On either side the ridge sloped sharply to a gulf. Ahead of them the last native was treading a strip of lava less than a foot wide, balancing himself like a tight-rope performer. Midway a shot struck him and he threw up his arms, spinning about before he rolled into the cañon.

Mrs. Gower balked at the perilous passage.

"I can never get over that," she said with decision. "Not in my skirts."

The king, with the sergeant and Loudon were kneeling, firing at sight. The latter turned to the widow.

"Ride it," he cried. "Like a saddle. Hitch yourself along. And, for Heaven's sake, hurry."

A bullet plopped through her skirts as she stood indecisive and she flopped down, gathering up her petticoats and exposing bony, black-stockinged shanks that worked like pistons as she dragged herself across the knife-edge. Serena gave up her rifle and nimbly followed. It was a desperate moment, silhouetted as they were upon the fin of the ridge.

Bristol crossed in safety and knelt once more to cover the two that were left. Rotorua insisted upon being the last. The decomposed lava crumbled under Loudon's feet and went rattling down into the gulf while bullets hummed about his ears. The king, coppery-red with rage, handled his huge bulk like a close-trained athlete.

"Now,——, we run," he said.

The path was wider now though uneven and crumbly with the weather. Back of them Toruki was shouting to his men, who hung back.

"They no like come along *tapu* place," panted Rotorua. "*Tapu* no trouble me, along me king."

The spur was thrust out from a circular wall of rock like the buttress to a round tower. The cliff mounted some twelve feet above them, ending in a notch through which the islanders were scrambling, urged on by the king. The last of them got through as the rear-guard came up.

The sergeant made a back and Loudon jumped upon it and clawed up to the opening where he lay down and reached to aid Mrs. Gower, who was still apparently more disturbed by her ruffled dignity than the actual danger. He hauled her up without ceremony and then the girl swung to his wrists, helping herself to clamber to his side. The sergeant handed up the rifles before he followed.

Toruki had failed to get his men to adventure the knife-edge and now Loudon, Serena and Bristol made such close shooting of it that they retreated from the ridge in the face of their leader's frantic commands. Toruki knelt and fired at Rotorua who grunted as he hooked his fingers into a crevice and drew up his weight with the great muscles swelling in his back. Loudon and the sergeant each loaned him a hand and he got across, seizing a gun and joining the rest with an especial sight for Toruki.

The *tindalo* seemed to have a charmed life. Three times Rotorua fired and grunted again at the misses. Twice Loudon beaded down fruitlessly upon the wizard's chest at less than a hundred yards while the sergeant swore cockney oaths at his own bad luck.

A hand was laid upon Loudon's shoulder.

"Let me try," said the girl.

She laid her barrel as steadily as a crack marksman of the range and pulled trigger. Something had jammed in the breech mechanism and, before she got it working again, Toruki had rejoined his men in the trees.

"Rotten luck," said Serena. Then, catching Loudon's gaze, "He is only a mad wild beast. He would do worse than shoot us if he could."

There was excitement of some sort under the trees. Shouts came from the deeper forest and the whole force of the pursuers disappeared. The white men had arrived. The Hawks were coming up with Henderson and the supercargo, furious at the loss of their loot. As Loudon figured this out he remembered the bag of pearls in his pocket. They were still there. By this time through Toruki, the adventurers would probably know of their existence.

The crew of the *Manawa* would be along, he thought, and they had been trained to shoot. The white men would not bother about the *tapu* but all the natives would and the whites would respect the crossing of the knife-edge. It could be easily commanded from the notch of the crater. But only one could cross it at a time and it was less than fifty yards range. For the present they were safe.

The crater was a bowl that had formed its own placement upon the spur. About it the broken mountains seemed to rise sheer save for the ridge. It was tree-set about its rim and on its curving floor. A fall cascaded into it, formed a pool and disappeared, finding some hidden outlet to the lower strata. Here and there the uneven walls curved inward at the crest and, despite the mounting sun, the basin was in full shade, a place of shadow where the sun came for a brief hour every day and the moon merely glimpsed at night.

In the cracks of the cindery walls contorted trees clung unruffled by the trade that passed overhead. The still air was damp and cold, the faces of the leeward rocks were green with mold. There was food of sorts. They were above the cocopalm zone but there were other nuts, wild oranges and mountain apples, and the

place seemed a favorite haunt of doves. With the water the spot seemed impregnable, as long as the food and ammunition held out.

There were, all told, a hundred and twenty-three of the king's men. Some were lying dead in the wood, of the rest a score were wounded, one or two severely. At the king's command they piled their weapons, about a hundred throwing-spears, a dozen clubs of sorts, fourteen Lee-Enfields and a handful of cartridges.

Added to these were the four rifles, three shotguns, revolver and the small pistol Mrs. Gower had brought together with Loudon's recovered automatic. For these last the ammunition was more plentiful though insufficient to last for more than an hour's general encounter. Still by way of the ridge, they could hold off Toruki indefinitely without wasting shots.

"Is there any other way out, or in?" Loudon asked the king after he had despatched the sergeant to play sentinel.

Rotorua led the way across the crater, mounting to the rim. A long valley lay gouged from the mountain, shallow and narrow by the crater but deepening and widening as it stretched southward to the sea, ending in a deep cañon. From their height Loudon traced the twisting course of the latter until it was lost in the thick forest growth that clothed the base of the hills.

"This way they can come along from the sea," said Rotorua. "But they mus' wait for tide to land and climb, oh plenty bad place. Take many hours. Me, I do not think white man can climb. Many place verihard, all same goat path. They land Moitapu, that my house in rains. There I have veribig canoe. Maybe we reach canoe, we get away."

"Can it sail faster than the sloop, king, in case they saw us? The sloop's no cup winner."

"Maybe we sail more fast if wind right. Suppose we get *lele* start I show you one trick. But no can do. Time we climb down, Toruki men wait for us maybe. Suppose I got spear?"

He raised his arms then dropped them in protest at the odds against them.

"Let's go back and talk it over," suggested Loudon.

They held a council by the pool. Toruki, they estimated, could gather nearly three hundred warriors from Hapai alone. Later he might recruit from the smaller islands of the group. If he had had time, Rotorua said, he could have gathered enough men about him to make the odds less heavy. But the islanders would be prone to join the stronger party.

The king explained more fully the difficulties of landing at Moitapu. At flood tide the waves washed the cliffs. At the ebb, small boats could make their way through a natural channel in the reefs to a terraced beach. The tide, as Loudon remembered, would be flooding until sunset after it turned at noon and there was not enough of the ebb left to last until Toruki's forces could reach Moitapu, either by sloop or in canoes.

There was no fear of an attack in that direction for many hours, probably not until dawn. They discussed the tactics that would likely be employed by the enemy and their own scanty preparations to meet them. Rotorua was moody. The loss of his kingship seemed imminent.

During a pause they heard the far-off patter of drums. Toruki was recruiting for his revolution.

"Where are your women and children?" suddenly asked Serena.

"They plenty safe. They go to *hare-tapu*."

"What is that?" asked Loudon.

The girl answered:

"It is a walled-in place that is *tapu* for every one who can take shelter there. Even Toruki would not dare to break that *tapu*. It is the island equivalent of the biblical Temples of Refuge and quite common to the South Sea groups."

"Is it far away?" asked Loudon. The king read his thought.

"Too plenty far now. No way can go. Maybe Toruki not savvy *tapu* for white-Mary. Plenty better, I think, for white-Mary not let Toruki come up along them," he added significantly.

Then he glanced at Mrs. Gower and grinned. "Maybe *you* safe," he said. "I think plenty *tapu* along of you, all right."

The roll of the drums deepened, thrown back from the sounding-board of the cliffs. Loudon went over to the notch and looked down. The island lay peaceful to the eye. A plume of smoke, marked burnings in the settlement.

The thick woods bent to the riotous trade

that swept down from the pass he had crossed the night before, the wrinkled round of the sea showed clear, bordered by the emerald lagoon and the silvered beach where the coco-palms waved. And, between the gusts, the throb of drums, incessant, augmenting, where the islanders were working themselves into a frenzy under the spur of Toruki's ambition and the adventurer's greed.

He returned to the rest, leaving the sergeant to keep the ridge. At the girl's request he told the story of his escape from the schooner and the crossing of the island and the king rolled approving eyes at him.

"I suppose they will tackle us from both sides eventually," said Loudon. "Threaten us from the ridge while Toruki gets up by way of Moitapu. We are in no shape to stand a rush. But the king says there is no chance of our getting out unless we cut our way through. And that, against the odds, with less than a quarter of our side properly armed, would be disastrous."

Rotorua had dropped his chin in his hand and sank into deep thought, looking once in a while at Loudon as if for inspiration.

"Bimeby," he said at last, "I think Toruki come along way, I show you. White men maybe try come along ridge same time. Suppose I had spear, I fight Toruki, I drive him over big cliff. Then, suppose white men come we fight them too, we go along Moitapu my *motu*. I get men from other island. Bimeby white men cartridges all go, we hunt them all same goats."

He looked at Loudon once more, doubtfully as if struggling toward a resolution.

"Laudoni," he said finally. "This place *tapu*, oh veribig *tapu*. But I am not afraid this *tapu* because I am king. Below this a place plenty cave in cliff. All kings, all *arii* (chiefs) they bury along here. I, Rotorua, am no coward. But I not like go along cave. Too many *aitu* live there. My father *aitu*, his father *aitu*. You are white man. Maybe you not afraid to go. Maybe *aitu* not touch you along *papalagi*-your-god too strong. In cave plenty spear, plenty *omare*."

He spoke low and fearfully. Desperate as was their need, he feared the wrath of the ghosts against the rifler of the weapons left with them for their prowess and defense in the underworld.

Loudon jumped to his feet.

"Show me the caves. Bristol can go along with me to tend rope if you'll play sentry, Miss Hargrave."

CHAPTER XI

DEAD MEN'S WEAPONS

TO ONE side of the spur the crater wall bulged out in a cape that overhung the abyss like a chin. It was well covered from observation by the fin of the ridge unless some watcher should chance to have worked to a new position. That was unlikely and he had to take the hazard. He would be safe from rifle-shot at all events. It would take a powerful glance to pick him up from the lower levels.

A rope was made of loin-cloths and, swinging to it, Loudon made his way beyond the projection, fending himself clear with his feet, going spiderwise down the face of the cliff above the dizzy abyss. Above, Sergeant Bristol superintended the letting out of the impromptu cable, anchored by a dozen husky islanders. Rotorua stood frowningly by, awaiting the result of the desecration. The faces of his followers worked with superstition. To them, Loudon was going to certain death.

The caves were mere slits in the face of the precipice, blowouts from gases enlarged by the beat of storm. Loudon carried a bundle of dry branches for illumination.

The end of a ball of light string, discovered in the game bag, was about his wrist, leading to the sergeant as a signal-cord. He gave it a twitch and the men stopped paying out the rope. Passing as it did over the bump, it was a simple thing to swing himself to a footing on the threshold of the cave where he fastened the line about a split in the rock.

The place smelled moldy. Bats and birds had desecrated the lofty tomb with their droppings and some of the winged mice fluttered out as he groped in. A twist of the cavity gave him a chance to light some of his branches. They flared up readily.

On the floor were big calabashes of wood checked by the weather, covered with rotting tapa cloth. Through the rents he could see the dull gleam of bones. The bodies of the dead chieftains had been

boiled and their skeletons collected and potted. Smaller food bowls stood here and there.

The ground was thick with soft dust that rose and choked him with ghostly residues. On a natural shelf lay long, shapeless bundles bound in brittle bark-cloth. They were almost beyond his reach and he tiptoed to get the nearest, hoping to find an armory. It shifted and slipped, coming down upon him and, as he flung it off in the disgust of discovery, rolling to where the branches blazed, with a crackle of burning tapa and the sickening stench of scorching skin and hair. It was the mummified body of a bygone priest, interred with the body intact against a savage resurrection day.

Something else had come with it, a great spear of ancient make, its handle of hardwood curiously carved and twelve feet long, bound with shark-skin handholds, its point, or blade, half as long as the butt, bristling with rows of sharks' teeth—a weapon to be used by six men, charging with it through the ranks of opposing warriors to rip the soft parts of their bodies.

Loudon collected some of the smaller bowls and inverted them, using them to raise himself, groping along the shelf and tossing to the floor an array of spears, warclubs and quarter-staves or omares. Some of the spears had tips hardened in the fire, others were armed with the fangs of the sea-tiger. There were some bows and arrows but the sinew strings had moldered and the flight feathers were gone.

Altogether it was a great find at the right moment. The mummy cloths were bound in sinnet twine, some of it unrotted. With this and the tougher portions of the cloth, Loudon made a bundle of the weapons, which he fastened to his rope, giving the signal to the sergeant to haul up. There was a shout of welcome before the line came flickering down again and he swung off to the next cave.

He searched seven of them, sending up ten bundles. In the last two caves the javelins were comparatively modern and were metal-tipped. Here also he found some shields of closely woven wicker. All told, he had discovered arms sufficient for thrice the number of the king's little army. Against them were the rifles and pistols, the clubs and spears of Toruki.

As he tied the last bundle, he pressed against the bag of pearls in his inner pocket. It would be better to hide them, he thought, in case of disaster. No one would think of looking for them in a burial cave, no native would dare. He carefully uncovered the *tapa* from one of the wooden bowls of bones and slipped in the bag, tying the *tapa* up once more with care. It was the last cave in the first row, counting from the south, and the fourth calabash from the entrance.

While he stood in the cave mouth, waiting for the returning line, he saw canoes gliding here and there on the lagoon, looking like water-bugs at the distance. Some of the smaller of them passed through the reef gate and careened suddenly to the southerly trade that swooped down at them, driving them fast toward the outlying islands of the Magdeburg group, blue along the horizon. These, he reasoned, were Toruki's envoys trying to rally the recent visitors to the *souruka* over to his cause.

Loudon could see clearly that this was Toruki's revolution. The *tindalo*, once drunk by victory, would handle the disposition of things to suit himself. He might let the adventurers have the money for their aid, but he might change his mind and decide to keep it for Toruki, together with the white women and the sloop.

Toruki was the type of the passing generation of Solomon Islander, resentful of the white man, cunning rather than reasoning, actuated by the whim or passion of the moment, regardless of reprisal that was not imminent.

The sloop, Loudon noticed, was not in evidence, doubtless remaining in the creek mentioned the night he escaped. Henderson and his supercargo would remain aboard, he felt sure. The canny Scot was not prone to risking either his own person or his property and he knew the islands and the islanders.

There were special stanchions and coils of barbed wire that could be swiftly rigged about the rail of the *Manawa* to keep off unauthorized and inquisitive savages who might be tempted by the sight of *papalagi* treasures. The skipper would probably keep part of his own crew and a proportion of the firearms, all of which would reduce the force of the attack. Henderson had participated in the actual raid on the bungalow with an eye to his full share but from now on he could be counted among the reserves.

MORE canoes crowded, gunwales and outriggers, were bowling along inside the reef in the direction of Moitapu to land for the main attack. Loudon jerked the signal string as he grasped his rope, the natives hauled in and he was soon back in the crater with his news. Rotorua was already dealing out the weapons, the handling of which had put fresh heart into his men.

It was noon and the crater basked in its hour of sunshine. Mrs. Gower, her arms about her thin knees, sought a sunny spot, as did the natives. Loudon dispatched the sergeant to relieve Serena and, when she returned, held conference with her, the widow and the king.

"Ha!" cried the king as he learned of the canoes. "They go Moitapu but tonight they no can come along. Look—" he hunkered down and scratched an illustration to his talk in the dirt—"this Moitapu, where they come along sunset. This-way, trail go in valley with veribig *pari* (precipice) both side. Here one veribig crack with big tree for bridge. Now come *pari* one time more, this-a-time all same front. They climb um slow. No can do after sun go down, maybe when moon come they start. Bimeby they come along this-a-way. I think white men try to come by ridge all same time.

"Maybe Toruki he give white man plenty kanaka along he think he drive us out of this place. We see bimeby. Me, I can think all same Toruki.. Maybe I think more quick. Before sun come up we go to pass, hide in bush. Some men we leave with gun here. Bimeby Toruki come and walk quiet along pass. Then we run down and *kill*. Tomorrow, Missy Hargrave, I show you one —— big fight."

The crapulous, ease-loving sovereign had vanished. Rotorua stood erect, his head lifted, the sun gleaming from his muscular back, every inch a king, repeating his plans to his men in their own language while they brandished their weapons and shouted back at him in sonorous chorus.

"I drive them over *pari*,——" cried Rotorua. "I drive them into sea."

His great body swayed as he broke into a chant, roaring out the deep-chested strophes while the warriors grunted their ecstatic approval. Serena, cross-legged on the short turf beside Loudon, softly translated the metrical stanzas:

I, Rotorua, the Heavenborn Lord of Hapai,
I, Rotorua the smiter, I, Rotorua the king;
I am the rock of the reef, deep-seated!
My enemies come as the waves, proud-crested,
Boasting and shouting and eager to conquer.
Toruki leads them, Toruki, my nephew, the wizard.
Cunning and boastful and brave in his numbers;
Promising presents to all when he taketh the kingdom.
See, like the waves to the reef they are mounting,
They darken the heavens and rise and curl over.
Lo, they are broken! They smash and surrender!
Backward they rush in defeat! Rotorua,
Heavenborn Lord of Hapai, has arisen!
Up, like a rock mid the surf he arises,
Unshaken, unharmed while his enemies scatter.
I, Rotorua have conquered! Toruki shrinks seaward;
Broken he goes and is drowned in the surf of his making!

He ended and a great shout went up, crashing back from the cliffs, scaring the doves that flew scattered above them like wind-tossed leaves.

Rotorua resumed his seat, his eyes flashing with the spirit of his improvisation and they perfected their plans. It seemed certain that the attack would be divided into an attempt, or a bluff, at carrying the ridge to cover Toruki's rush from the rear. Rotorua hoped to smash Toruki's main force from ambush.

The sergeant with half a dozen of the natives who were fairly good shots, would hold the notch and the knife-edge until word was sent for them to come on and form the rear-guard in the advance to Moitapu or they themselves were beaten back to the crater by superior force. Loudon and Serena were to act as sharpshooters and back up Rotorua's attack.

The king told off the various squads of his tiny army. First the javelin-throwers, to be followed by the carriers of the great flesh-tearing spears for use against the groups that would form as soon as Toruki's men saw they were attacked. Then the club-men, covered by rifle fire as long as it lasted.

Loudon felt hungry and knew that he only echoed the rest.

"Miss Hargrave," he proposed, "if we've figured this out right there's plenty of time before us. Suppose you and I go out with the shotgun and tackle those doves. We can all fight better for food."

The girl got to her feet.

"We'll make a match of it," she said. "The three of us. And look out for aunt or she'll wipe the eyes of both of us."

Loudon looked in surprise at the widow who had stated that she could not hit a barn.

"I'm no good with a rifle," said Mrs. Gower. "The recoil is too heavy. But I used to get my share of partridges and grouse when I was younger and I believe my eyesight is still good."

It was. She got her doubles with a precision that astonished Loudon and awed the natives who went before them to flush the birds and behind to pick up the bag. The doves seemed loath to leave their upland home, flying straight and hard from rim to rim, going or coming like feathered rockets.

Whenever they could they fired into the mass to save cartridges for there were nearly one hundred and thirty to feed, to say nothing of Rotorua, to whom a dove would be barely a mouthful. They shot until their barrels were blistering and the pile of doves made a feathered pyramid. And Mrs. Gower was high gun, with Loudon a bad third.

An oven had been built and heated with stones. *Ti* leaves were wrapped about the plucked birds while a force gathered fruit. When the pits were opened every one frankly ate until they could hold no more. After the meal, Mrs. Gower dozed off, gently at first, then with a snoring crescendo.

Loudon sat beside the girl watching the king drill his men in the use of their new weapons. Bristol's meal had been taken to him at the notch. A dozen men busied themselves in piling up brushwood for fires in the crater and a beacon to be placed at the foot of the little cliff below the notch and provide against a night surprise.

The girl seemed wrapped in her own thoughts and Loudon drifted into a half-sleep, ineffably tired, yet too excited for oblivion. There were dark circles under the girl's eyes, he noticed, and her finely cut features seemed drawn and tired. Her lashes lay long on her cheeks, her breast rose and fell softly. One hand lay upward, its fingers gently curved, the same fingers that had been so flexible and sensitive on the piano keys, and so crisp upon the trigger. The bands of her pale gold hair revealed a tiny ear, rose-tinted and delicately carven as a shell.

She was an enigma to Loudon. For the moment she seemed very girlish in her exhaustion, there was perhaps a tender kernel beneath that shell of her self-sufficiency that forbade his feeling sorry for her.

It might be the aristocracy of breeding that leavened girl and aunt with the calm pluck they exhibited. The whole affair might have been a picnic instead of the desperate hazard that it was. Aristocracy was not played out, after all, he reflected dreamily. There were thousands of Serena's class and caste who had died and were doomed to die in the trenches at the other side of the world.

Probably few were left of her own immediate line. Her father was barely cold in his grave and she faced the world and what she considered her responsibilities undauntedly. He wondered if she would soften in different circumstances or if all British girls were cast in her mold. He almost felt himself as much alien to her as if they had not shared a common language. Indeed, they did not use it alike. And, idly picturing her in pleasanter surroundings, he fell asleep.

It was very quiet in the crater save for the guttural commands of Rotorua and the occasional answers of his men. The song of blackbirds came sweetly shrill from the valleys, the rainbowed fall sounded in low harmony to the sough of the overhead trade, the hum of insects and the perfume of flowers were plain to the languid senses bound in the languor of the tropic afternoon. Great butterflies wafted by. It was hard to realize the place beleaguered by death.

Bristol's rifle rang out, the startled doves once more whirred upward and Loudon jumped to his feet, grasping his rifle. The girl opened startled eyes and followed his action. Rotorua led his racing men to the notch. The sergeant was still peering along his sights, the thin smoke trailing off.

CHAPTER XII

THE GHOST LIGHTS

"THAT'S where they were," said the sergeant, "down there where the ridge dips to the woods hin that bit hof a gap. I thought I saw some kanakas slipping through the trees. Then a man come hout hinto the hopen for a second hand I takes a shot hat 'im, hoff-'anded. White man, dressed hup hin white ducks. Heasy mark hif my sights 'ad bin right. Hand I saw

smoke a little while hago, hoff to the left. 'Aving grub, I suppose."

"Moving up to take position, I suppose," said Loudon. "You've got a good eye, sergeant. Do you want relief?"

"Not me, sir. Hall I want his a crack hat one hof them renegades. I hain't forgot the w'y they stood hoff when Toruki tries to habduct Miss 'Argrave, hand I was trussed hup, hand you slamming hinto 'em. They come hup with the king but they didn't hoffer to 'elp none."

"I haven't forgotten that either," said Serena as she and Loudon walked back to where Mrs. Gower still snored while a parrot scolded at the raucous sounds from a bough above her. "We have been so rushed, you know, that I haven't had a fair chance to thank you. You've been simply awfully sporting about it all and that trip over the pass was a ripping thing to do. It must have been a terrible experience."

He was still conscious of smarting knees and many bruises but he laughed.

"I wasn't exactly popular on the schooner," he said. "I was glad of the chance to get away and I'm still more glad that I got across in time. I wonder if they've found the gold?"

"I think not. We buried it in a little cave in the brush that was covered with bushes. We have the pearls anyway."

"That reminds me, Miss Hargrave."

He told her of the hiding of the pearls in the burial calabash. She gave him an approving little nod and a flash of small white teeth.

"You are very satisfactory, you know, Mr. Loudon. That was thoughtful of you."

There it was again, he thought whimsically—"Very satisfactory"—the sort of thing she might say to a new butler after a week's trial. Conventionality at such a time and place seemed *bizarre* yet he could think of nothing more apt than "Don't mention it." His lack of poise aggravated him.

"Look at Rotorua," she said suddenly. "What in the world is he doing?"

"Up for batting practise," murmured Loudon and smiled covertly as she surveyed him blankly.

At times their mutual language seemed to need an interpreter.

The king was standing in a clear space opposed by half a dozen of his warriors armed with javelins. The ax that Loudon had given him was across his shoulders and he carried a long staff of hardwood, loaded at the ends with metal, one of the *omares* Loudon had sent up from the caves, balanced in both hands. He gave a signal and the men commenced to hurl their spears at him. There was no make-believe, the javelins were steel-tipped and swished through the air with accurate aim and force enough to go through the carcass of a beef.

Not one touched the king. Perhaps as many as five were constantly in the air but he warded them off with ease, angling his weapon so that they glanced to right and left, moving his ponderous body with astonishing suppleness. The swift-swinging *omare* proved a perfect shield under the cover of which he constantly advanced upon the flingers who gave way until they had exhausted their supply of spears, when the monarch rushed upon them with a shout, brandishing his quarter-staff, and they fled amid the laughter of their fellows.

"Say," said Loudon. "I read in Honolulu of Kamehameha the First doing that stunt as an exhibition but I thought it was hero-stuff piled on by the chroniclers. He's some little old king, is Rotorua!"

For two hours Rotorua exercised his men until the sun slanted close to the sea line. The air was growing chilly and a great fire was lit about which the natives devoured the remnants of the mid-day meal. Night massed swiftly in the valleys and the cloud piles above the peaks glowed like clumps of opal matrix. The shadows reached out landward, the tree-tops picked out like jewels. Beyond the range, the shadow of the island brooded for leagues upon the sea, the island growth rendered tributary incense for relief from the heat of the day, the woodland sounds ceased and the eager stars seemed to rush forward to their stations.

On the cliff below the notch, the sergeant kindled the watchfire and, backed by the fireworn rock, it sent a ruddy glow into the sky and long radiant beams reaching along the ridge to the knife-edge passage. From the beach the crater must have appeared to have awakened to its lava-brewing, fire-tossing mission once again.

The girl, her aunt and Loudon had a little fire of their own and sat close to it, glad of the warmth, while they listened to the chanting of the warriors.

"They are singing a *mere* to the king,"

she said. "The composer chants and the rest repeat the last lines. This is how it goes."

Some one had found a hollow log and three men were beating on it in time to the cadence of the chant. Softly at first, the song increased in tempo and volume with a primitive, indescribable swing to it that was martial, inspiring, sending the blood tingling to the finger-tips. Loudon found himself caught in its glamour and his fists clenched about his rifle while the desire to shout with the chorus mounted. Serena's eyes were shining in the firelight; even Mrs. Gower nodded to the rhythm.

Rotorua the king! Mighty eater and smiter!
Rotorua the palm that grew from the seed of Heaven.
Winner of battles, he, provider of food for his children.
Who can withstand the strength of his arm in his anger?
He treads—and the island shakes, his glance is the lightning;
He speaks—and the thunder rolls. Lo, the sky is cracking.

And all the chorus chanted:

Who is like Rotorua? Rotorua the winner of battles!
Quaker of earth and sky, provider of food for his children!

Lo, as the mullet flee before the shark in the shallows,
Even as smoke that is blown to sea by the land-wind,
So shall his enemies scatter, scatter and utterly perish.
Naught shall be left of his foes, not even a name that is whispered.
Their bones shall be gound into dust and fed to the birds of the forest.
Toruki the boaster shall die and his name be forgotten.

Who is like Rotorua? Rotorua who smiteth Toruki?
And giveth his bones to the birds while his name is forgotten.

So it went, stanza after stanza in praise of the king, of themselves and depreciation of their enemies, the very monotony of the cadence giving it strength, while the boasting whipped their spirits into a frenzy for the morrow's fight

"I suppose Toruki is doing the same thing on the other side of the island," said Loudon, "and perhaps the crowd between us and the settlement. I am going to relieve Bristol until midnight. Will you walk over with me?"

She rose, shivering a little as they left the fire but refusing the coat he offered her. Two kanakas tended the blaze where the sergeant crouched watchful and wide-eyed.

"'There's a bit hof a fire down there," said Bristol. "You can't see hit now. Hit's burned down a bit. Hand you can 'ear the beggars singing, hor you could before hour chaps started."

They strained their eyes into the darkness. The chant in the crater ceased for a moment before a fresh bard took place and they could hear somewhere in the vault of darkness the far-off patter of drums and a whisper of song.

Behind them the new improviser started:

This is a song to the king.
I, the singer of songs, Tarui;
I, who have lived on Hapai,
Long years before you were suckled,
I, old Tarui, shall tell you
How a star tumbled at midnight.
This was the birth of . . . .

THE triumphant pæan broke off short. There came a wail from the crater, an eery, soul-curdling cry of "*Auwe, ta aitu!*" (Alas, the ghosts!) Then a hubbub of shrill affrighted voices and a rush of men to the notch as Loudon and the girl clambered back into the bowl, confronting a horde of terror-stricken natives, their boasting forgotten, running pell-mell for the outlet with their heads turned on their shoulders.

"Back!" cried Loudon, translating his meaning with emphatic gestures. "Where's Rotorua? Get back, you idiots! Bristol, hold them. Hang it, I can't talk to them."

"I can," said Serena. "You get the king. Bristol and I can manage these."

She stood slim and calm, confronting the frantic savages, her voice clear as a trumpet while she harangued them, backed by the sergeant. Loudon tore across the crater toward a huddle of men surrounding Rotorua. Their faces showed in the flare of the fire contorted with panic, many of them were kneeling with their arms tossed starward, others prostrated themselves in a grovel of fear.

By the side of the king, whose leonine face was working as his great eyeballs rolled, was Mrs. Gower gesticulating toward the pool while her words, unknown in their meaning to Loudon, held the sting of a lash. Under their scorn Rotorua hung his head amid the howls of his followers.

"What's wrong?" panted Loudon, as he broke through the ring. "Have they gone crazy?"

"A pack of fools and children," snorted the widow. "Afraid of a lot of Jack-o'-lanterns. Pah! Rotorua, I am ashamed of you."

The king's teeth were chattering. His bulk was jellied with fear.

"They are ghost-lights," he answered. "Laudoni, I was afraid for you to go along burial caves. Look, the *aitus* are angry, they have come for their spears." The kanakas moaned in unison.

Loudon looked toward the pool. It was fringed with tall rushes and, over these, across the water, skimming the surface, lifting and dipping, were pale globular lights of the hue of burning alcohol, corposants formed from the marsh gas, a sight easily imagined to be of ghostly origin by less superstitious minds than the credulous slanders.

"Will-o'-the-wisps," said Loudon, groping for some quick turn to change the situation that had taken all the bravery out of the men who, but a minute before, had been so vaingloriously certain of their prowess.

"They are *aitus*," muttered the king.

"*Aitus* perhaps, but not come to harm you. They have come to tell you that you have their good-will, not their hatred, king. See—I was the one who took the weapons. I am not afraid of them. They will not hurt me, king, for I have done no wrong to seek their help. If they are angry, then I will be the one they seek."

He strode down to the pool while the islanders watched breathless, expecting to see him stricken down, destroyed, carried off by the revengeful ghosts.

The will-o'-the-wisps were gliding among the rushes, clinging with a swaying motion to whatever arrested their purposeless flight. As Loudon neared them he could see that they were centered with lambent flame. The disturbance of his wading caused them to float away from his neighborhood and he stood stock still to let the light breeze waft one in his direction, holding out his arms and keeping them motionless. An *ignis fatuus* came bobbingly toward him, knee-high, and hung for a moment on the fabric of his trousers. Another mounted waywardly and trembled at his very fingertips.

There was a gasp of awe, then a sudden shout. The kneeling men still prostrated themselves but it was no longer in fear. It was in awe and admiration for the white man. A cry of "The White Wizard!" went up with "*Eyahs!*" of wonder. He stayed there for a few seconds and then came out of the rushes. They drew back before him and made a lane through which he walked up to the king. He had saved the situation.

"*Eyah!*" said Rotorua. "Did I not say you were a brave man and an *arii*. Truly you are a *tindalo* greater than Toruki."

He changed to the island tongue and made a speech to his men, now augmented by the runaway group who had come timorously back from the notch with Serena. The old improviser took up his chant again but this time it was in honor of Loudon:

This is a song to Laudoni,
Laudoni, the wizard of wizards!
Lo, he has conquered the dead,
As we shall conquer the living.
Aitus come at his call, he summons the souls from the caverns.
They shine on his brow like stars, they bow and acknowledge him master.
Long shall the tale be told of the white man, our brother, the wizard:
Told when the stars are out and the children whimper and listen.
How Rotorua the king——

It went on interminably, to Loudon's embarrassment, fancying that the girl was laughing at him. At last it ended amid a salvo of "*Eyahs!*" and he went back to relieve Bristol. Serena went with him.

"You have been immortalized," she said. "A thousand years from now the beaches will know of Laudoni, friend of ghosts."

"I didn't do half what you and your aunt pulled off," he replied. "You were both wonderful. If it hadn't been for your jumping in, the whole lot would have scattered. It was a scarey-looking performance to them, I suppose, coming on top of my robbing the caves."

You are to be congratulated on your quick wit, Mr. Loudon. You were really very impressive, standing there in the rushes with one jack-o'-lantern at your knee and another hanging on to your fingers. Did you know that one floated up and lit on your cap, like a halo?"

He felt that she was laughing at him.

"I must have looked like a half illuminated Christmas tree," he said. "Now

then, you are to go back to the fire and get some sleep. Those are orders. And take my coat to put over you. I'll be by the fire, in the notch and won't need it."

She took the coat. Thanks for that sort of office did not seem to occur to her. "Thinks it is her right," thought Loudon as he walked waay. He borrowed the sergeant's watch.

"I'll wake you at twelve, Bristol," he said. "We'll be moving about three. You are going to stay here with six of the best shots and hold the ridge. They'll make a bluff at crossing it. We are shy on cartridges, so don't waste any. If you only fire once in a while they won't follow you up so quickly when we send back the runner for you to come in.

"I've figured out we can spare you fifteen rounds apiece, so go easy. They have probably arranged on some signal and I shouldn't be surprised if it was the first touch of the sun on the peaks. That comes this side of the island and you may expect a rush. The guns will give Toruki the tip if he can't see the peak from the trail that leads up back of the crater."

"Hall right, sir. I'll 'old 'em. 'Old 'em like 'Oratius hon the bridge."

The little fire burned brightly, the end of its glare resting on the knife-edge. No sound came upward to Loudon as he sat with his rifle ready. Back in the crater the singing fell to desultory chatter and then ceased. Above the purring, gently crackling fires only one sound broke the silence—the reverberant, resonant snore of Mrs. Gower.

CHAPTER XIII

BREWSTER PROPOSES

THE STARS swung in their constellations, the Southern Cross dipped seaward while the islanders drowsed by the fire, occasionally throwing on a dried branch, and Loudon lay in the cleft, the cool sea-wind battling with the land-breeze and fanning him with spicy airs. He was drenched with sleep and weariness and looked at the watch a dozen times in the hope that he could get to the few hours of rest ahead of him.

It was just half-past eleven when the green light of what he guessed to be a Coston signal flared on the ridge beyond the knife-edge. He sighted at the void behind it his finger tightening on the trigger. The light betokened the presence of some one from the schooner.

They were well beyond the knife-edge, a reflected finger of the fire traced it from end to end of the perilous passage. The natives below him sprang to their rifles at the sound of his shifting position and squatted, gazing fearfully at the sputtering signal.

A voice spoke out of the darkness.

"Is that you, Loudon?" It was Brewster's even tones.

"What do you want? Speak in a hurry or I'll fire."

"Wait till you have a talk. I am all alone. You'll find it worth while."

Loudon debated with himself. Their position was too precarious for them to dispense with any information and he might learn something worth while.

"Leave your guns behind you and come across the ridge to the fire," he called. Once their side of the knife-edge, the gambler would be powerless.

"I have your word for safe come and go?"

"Yes."

"All right. Brighten up your fire a bit, will you?"

Loudon admired perforce the coolness of the man as he stepped across the crumbling lava fin, with little fragments broken off by his feet clattering distinctly in the night silence down into the gulfs on either side of him.

He halted in the full radiance of the fire, Loudon keeping his position in the notch, discarding his rifle for the readier automatic, prepared to dispose of the gambler at the first sign of treachery. Brewster quietly hunkered down, ignoring the natives.

"No use playing out a rotten hand, Loudon," he said. "You've had one or two good cards and you've laid 'em down. I've got all the trumps. Now then, we want that gold and the pearls. You've got 'em or you've hidden them somewhere. Come across and we'll give you and the ladies free passage to one of the atolls and leave a boat for you to get away in after we've gone. We'll want your words that you won't leave for twenty hours after we are out of sight and your promise not to give out our descriptions or the name of the schooner."

"That is idiotic. The money belongs to

the British Government. They'll hunt you down and you know it."

"We'll take our chances of that. Anyhow if you don't accept you'll be left to the tender mercies of Toruki. I don't have to tell you, Loudon, to what lengths these natives will go once they are worked up. I'll leave that to your imagination with the stimulus that Toruki has set his heart on amusing himself with the women—the younger one in particular."

Loudon broke in sharply:

"We'll leave them out of the discussion, Brewster. We can take care of ourselves. I wouldn't advise them to accept your offer if I believed that you would carry out your promises, which I do not. If Toruki is not to be trusted how can you offer us a safe conduct?"

But Brewster was not to be trapped into any admission of plans or a confession that the forces were divided.

"That is our affair. We can handle Toruki between now and the morning. I've given you your chance. If you think you can afford to decide for those who are, after all, most concerned, we've got no especial quarrel with you, outside of what you did with Tomi, and we'll let that slide. Better talk it over with the rest, since I am not to mention their names.

"You're in the frying pan, all of you, and I'm offering you better than fire. Give us what we want and we'll be out of this before dawn and leave Rotorua and Toruki to fight it out. You're shy of ammunition, you haven't got spears enough for a tenth of your men and we are four to one. Don't be a fool, man."

There was a certain amount of logic in the gambler's argument. Their lives were in jeopardy. If they gave up the gold, the pearls would have to stay where they were, it would mean a reprieve for the two women.

He had thought shudderingly of what their capture by Toruki would mean. If they kept their arms they could insist upon fair treatment aboard the schooner and maroonment on an atoll, with or without the promised boat, might be better to face than the doubtful outcome of the present. Perhaps, Loudon thought, he should put the matter before Serena and Mrs. Gower. They could leave Rotorua some ammunition. He had plenty of other weapons. If. . . .

A clear voice spoke across his shoulder.

"The man is wasting time, Mr. Loudon. You are perfectly right. The money belongs to the British Government which will undoubtedly seek out and punish those who have abetted an insurrection against its regent and attempted to abduct its representative."

"Loudon has told you all he knows, apparently," sneered Brewster.

The girl took no notice of him.

"I would suggest, Mr. Loudon," she went on, "that this person be given five minutes to retire beyond the narrow place in the ridge. I see you have a watch on your wrist."

Her tones were crisp and decisive. Loudon felt much as if he had been the sergeant. Evidently she felt her position supreme as the regulator of affairs on the island. Brewster sneered.

"Petticoat government, I see. Of course, if you have your orders, Loudon, there is nothing to say. I was offering you a way out of it. We'll get the money anyway."

"You'll get just five minutes to cross that firelight zone, Brewster," said Loudon. "I should recommend you to hurry."

Brewster shrugged his shoulders.

"You'll be sorry for this after Toruki gets his paws on you, young lady," he said.

Loudon raised his pistol and it's blue metal flashed dully in the light of the fire. He was not anxious to raise the general alarm but he would gladly have seen Brewster rolling down the side of the ridge before he said anything further concerning Toruki's desire to avenge his supposed insult on the women.

"Three and a half minutes now," he said. "And every word reduces that by half a minute, Brewster. That's all."

The gambler sensed the determination behind the words and swaggered away, betraying a furtive hurry as he crossed the knife-edge. The blackness swallowed him up and Loudon turned to the girl.

"Did you hear all he said?" he asked.

"You were talking when I came up. I could not sleep and I heard voices talking in English. You acted excellently, Mr. Loudon. It must be time for your relief and I am sure you need some rest after your last night's adventure. I shall go and wake the sergeant."

She turned and left him. The "divine right" had asserted itself once more. Apparently, thought Loudon, the whole world

revolved about the possessions of his Majesty the King. He had been praised for what he had done to further that cause. It was funny and he had to laugh. He had acted upon the impulse of chivalry and his achievements had been accepted as homage to her sovereign.

"It is a funny old world," Loudon told himself as the sergeant came up. "I would like to know just how she works inside. She seems to regard me as a fief or a vassal or whatever they call it. 'You acted excellently, Mr. Loudon.' But she's game."

Serena was coiled up beside her aunt when he reached the fire. His coat was about her, he noticed.

Well, he decided, as he squirmed into the warmth, Queen Elizabeth was more grateful for Raleigh's cloak. But then he was a knight and I am a commoner. No, I'm wrong, she knighted Raleigh for keeping the mud off her shoes. Oh, well. . . .

His thought ended in sleep that rushed upon him and held him bound until the sergeant touched his shoulder.

"Three h'oclock, sir, hand a rocket 'as just gone hup from the beach."

CHAPTER XIV

THE AMBUSH

THE INDIANS call the hour before the dawn, the "dead hour." It is then that the life-tide is slack, the will withdrawn, the operator asleep at the telephone exchange of the brain and nerves. It is the hour of attack—both criminal and thieftaker know its advantages. Sudden awakening finds the subject lacking coordination, it is a rare man who comes back to consciousness in the full possession of his faculties in this vacuum-time between night and day. And this in your own, familiar bed, not in surroundings strange and ominous.

The fires were burning low and the crater was filled with the deep breathing of men as Loudon sent the sergeant back to his post and walked over to where Rotorua lay by the dulling embers. The trade wind had subsided, the stars dripped radiance and the bowl of the crater seemed to hang between heaven and the world that spun on beneath it.

Inside of two hours, at the most, they would be fighting for their lives in combat that the scarcity of guns and cartridges must soon make a hand-to-hand affair. The skirmish in the woods the day before had not affected him particularly, the bullets had flown high but with the exception of the scramble across the knife-edge, there had seemed very little danger.

Now, however, things looked differently and he wondered how he would shape against Toruki's islanders, trained in their primitive weapons, muscled for their use, lacking the imagination that painted for Loudon with a vivid brush all the hideous possibilities of defeat. For him it might mean a merciful blow with a club, for the women, shame and torture and then, the smoking ovens.

Loudon had read up well in the literature of the South Seas—Stevenson, London, Osborne and Beck—now he devoutly wished that he had not. Three lines from Stevenson's "Marquesan Manners" broke constantly through his thoughts and persistently projected themselves upon the screen of his mental vision.

Once and again descended the murderous blow.
Now smoked the ovens, and now, with the cutting lip of a shell,
A butcher of ninety Winters jointed the bodies well.

There was nothing extraordinary about Loudon. He was merely a clean-living, well-muscled, level-headed American, whose chivalry had tumbled him headlong into a sea of troubles, the chief of which were Serena and her aunt. At all hazards they must not fall into Toruki's hands.

In the eery, early hour the proposition made by Brewster seemed the only sensible move. He should have set aside the girl's ideas of duty and asserted himself. The odds were tremendously against them. Rotorua was fighting for his regency, Serena was fighting for the fetish of duty to a far-off king who could only revenge and not protect her, and he—what the devil am I in this for, after all?—he asked himself.

It was not easy to analyze the impulse after his original move to protect two helpless women who had turned out more than ordinarily well capable of looking out for themselves and who accepted his services as a matter of course. But, being in it. . . .

with the cutting lip of a shell,
A butcher of ninety Winters jointed the bodies well.

Stevenson's genius for word painting was an unpleasant gift. The word "jointed" was peculiarly suggestive.

Rotorua lay on his back, puffing and snorting in his sleep with great limbs twitching, much as a hound pursues a quarry in its dreams. As Loudon bent and touched him he opened his eyes that rolled red in the firelight and reared himself erect.

"All right," he grunted as Loudon told him of the rocket. "Time we go."

He roused the sleepers and marshaled them, telling off the shooters who were to stay with the sergeant while Loudon counted out the stingy supply of cartridges for the defense of the knife-edge. As he went toward the notch another rocket soared, wavered against the brightness of the stars and died. From the valleys came the boom-boom of drums and a spark of flame far down the ridge.

Serena and her aunt came toward him carrying rifles. The shot-gun cartridges were nearly gone and Loudon left them and the weapons with Bristol for use at close quarters. Rotorua was haranguing his men in low gutturals—here and there a spear-head glowed. The fires had not been replenished and even the hardy islanders shivered in the chill.

The moon was horning low to the fire-tortured pinnacles. The issue was upon them. Toruki and his followers were already creeping up the trail from Moitapu. Five dollars for a nickel cup of coffee, thought Loudon, as he looked at Serena, warming her hands by the fire. The finger-ends were pinched, her face drawn and white despite the reflection of the crimson ashes. But she smiled up at him. Her aunt stood by clasping a rifle, every line and angle of her spare figure grim and uncompromising. If will were force thought Loudon, she'd scatter Toruki with a "scat."

They picked some fruit as they went but the fare was mere vexation. The islanders had girded their loin-cloths tightly about them and went filing silently along the trail, up and over the curling lip of the bowl into the head of the gouge, barely a depression at its head but deepening rapidly as it sloped to the cliff that marked its junction with the cañon that led to Moitapu.

The little force was divided equally into left and right wings and, on Rotorua's command, separated in the dim light, working down slowly along the brush-covered sides. The king walked with Loudon, the two women and six picked riflemen. More marksmen had been told off to the opposite slope with strict orders not to fire until the king gave the word.

"We wait," he said. "Bimeby Toruki come along between all. Then we fight plenty quick and hard. Drive him down along *pari*. Only one *lele* path, rest all *pari*. Suppose we rush, my word, we make um fall over, we drive um like goat. Me, I talk along Toruki with this"—he patted the steel ax at his naked side—"I make Toruki head split like coconut."

There was no smack of boasting in his words. If he could break through to Toruki there would be a dead *tindalo*, thought Loudon.

Behind them the peaks were flooded with brilliant yellow and the rent vapors that floated from the crests and surged in the fissures glowed sulfur and salmon. The sea horizon trembled and radiants of rose, the spokes of the uprolling sun, searched the arch of the sky. The ravine turned gray, the main cañon showed deep blue. Along the bottom of the gouge black specks were crawling upward in little groups that resolved themselves into warriors moving at a jog-trot. The golden light on the peaks spread swiftly downward and the flaming disc of the sun appeared, rapidly mounting and jeweling the sea.

A sputter of firing broke out, coming from the crater, the reports echoed sharply by the cliffs. The besiegers were running rapidly, flecks of light breaking from their weapons.

Rotorua crouched beside Loudon and the two women, his hands gripping his quarter-staff until the knuckles showed blue-gray, his face seamed with hard lines at eyes and lips, his nostrils dilated, watching the advance. Loudon, breathing hard, kept his eyes on a patch bare of scrub and grass that formed the pit of a little amphitheater where the gouge was at its widest.

The moment Toruki's force was well within this space, Rotorua would give the word and the king's men would swoop upon them from four directions in a desperate sally. Toruki had halted to one side of his advance—they could catch the crisp staccato of his orders. His men closed up and the king's eyes gleamed.

The wizard was bedecked in his wiggery of beards and girdled with the long black tresses. As he showed distinctly, Loudon shifted his rifle. Rotorua laid a big hand upon the barrel.

"No," he said with gruff emphasis. "Toruki, he mine."

Suddenly he rose to his feet and roared out his one word of command in Melanesian.

"Kill."

THE RIFLES spat and Toruki's warriors whirled about in a mob. Three or four of them sprawled on the ground, clutching convulsively at the soil. Toruki broke his way to their center, shouting, and the mob became a circle of defense, the brown bodies hidden behind great shields of wicker, topped with heads whose lips were stretched in the fighting grin and hands that flourished glittering spears. Little jets of rifle fire broke out from between the shields as the king's men leaped down to the attack.

Loudon turned to Serena, lying stretched on her stomach at his side, reloading.

"No use firing any more yet," he said. "*Pau.*"

The native shooters caught his meaning and held their fire. They were as likely to kill their own side as the other. With a shower of javelins, Rotorua's men had rushed the circle, forcing a breach here and there through which tore the groups bearing the great raking spears. The fight was a *mêlée* of uptossed arms, shouts and the steady glitter of blades. The clubmen swung their maces and through the riot Rotorua raged, swinging his staff in his left hand while the steel ax rose and fell on skulls and shoulders until its shining surface was dulled with blood.

Into the circle the king's men surged, turned and fought their way out again. Once the ring was broken, the shields were an incumbrance and the bows and arrows useless. The circle was split into quadrants, two of which wavered and fled before the fury of the surprise, clambering the sides of the ravine to be picked off by rifle fire. Loudon found himself shouting as a panting savage went down before his bullet. He was itching to rush down to close quarters but he had no weapon and he doubted himself a match in a hand-to-hand combat. The girl's lips were pressed close together, her hands were tremorless as she sighted and pulled trigger.

A group of four warriors came charging up toward them, three of them with rifles, intent upon gaining the heights. It was impossible for them to tell foe from friend, except by their attitude, and Loudon wondered how the natives, once a united tribe, distinguished their enemies. But these were plainly Toruki's men.

The islanders lying beyond Serena fired and missed, wasting precious cartridges. Loudon hit one man in the shoulder and smashed it. The native dropped his rifle but came on, tossing a spear with his left. It struck the brush between Loudon and the girl as he fired again and hit the man in the chest. Another had fallen from Serena's shot and a third was spinning wildly down hill trying to hold his balance.

The last, his face ferocious with its daubs of paint and tossing plumes, reached the other side of the clump behind which Loudon and the girl lay. His arm whirled up above them. Loudon could see the straining muscles, the clenched fist that grasped a wide-bladed spear. He rose on one knee, warding off the blow from Serena. He had just fired the last shot in his breech and the girl seemed unable to get in position to fire.

There was a crack just behind him, a spurt of flame that seared the top of his skull and the warrior's spear dropped harmless into the brush while his features widened in a look of utter surprise. Loudon saw a tiny blur between his eyes before he toppled to his knees and fell with his body downhill.

Loudon heard a sniff followed by a short "Ha!" Mrs. Gower stood behind him with her tiny pistol in her hand. At anything less than powder range it was no more effective than a popgun, but the little pellet had found its mark.

"The beast," she said. "Look, they are beginning to run."

It was true. Rotorua's men had formed a close cordon across the ravine and were slowly but surely herding Toruki's men backward to the cliff. They had thrown aside their clumsier, more ancient weapons and armed themselves with those of the fallen, pressing hard upon the fugitives to prevent the latter getting their bows into action.

Ammunition generally appeared short, but few shots were being fired on either side.

The king's sharpshooters emptied their rifles and bounded down to join the main attack. Toruki was back of his warriors, belaboring them while he exhorted them to stop the rout. A rally might easily have turned the day.

The gulch was dotted with dead and dying men. Short and sharp as had been the tussle, the toll was heavy. The thin line of Rotorua's men seemed pitifully inadequate. Half of them had gone down but the rest fought like demons, driving their opponents in front of them with an impetus that could not be resisted.

Rotorua had forseen that victory lay in a counter-surprise upon those confident that they themselves were on the way to establish one, and a series of swiftly delivered hammer-blows before the enemy could gather themselves. If the tide of battle flowed back toward the crater his own line tightened automatically in the narrowing gulch. If Toruki's men tried to escape they were met with rifle fire from the hillsides or retreated in the desired direction, toward the steep precipice.

But what was to be done had to be done speedily. The rifles could not shoot many rounds—before long the crater might be forced by a rush across the knife-edge after the sergeant's cartridges were exhausted and, above all, the king knew the psychological value of "keeping them on the run," that applies to men as well as sheep or cows.

Loudon saw a man turn and race back toward the crater, a runner sent for Bristol. The king felt that the tide had turned in his favor. The victory was largely his by right of personal prowess. He had discarded his ax for the time being and whirled his staff two-handed. His foes shrank from facing him and, as they turned to dodge, the weighted *omare* crashed through their skulls as a heavy heel through puddle ice. Time and time again he broke through their ranks, striving to reach Toruki who, surrounded by a knot of his best warriors captained his host at the back of the failing line, rushing from one weakening spot to another.

Rotorua was in his element. The gin-bibber had been banished and the mighty frame and muscles of the man obeyed the lash of his outraged will. The tissues that Loudon had deemed idle fat were firm, padding tendon and sinew and deep-sheathed muscle above ponderous bone. The big paunch served to aid the great bellows of his lungs that labored under the giant cage of his ribs.

Once his quarter-staff, slippery with blood, was wrenched from his hands by a desperate foeman. The king sprang, grasping the man by his throat as he swung up his club, choking his triumphant cry to a moan as his spine cracked under the resistless clutch and he tumbled in a lump at Rotorua's feet. The king stooped, wiped his hands in the hair of the dead man, deliberately used the frizzy locks to wipe clean his *omare*, and waded on toward Toruki.

His men were forcing themselves between the fleeing tribesmen and the right-hand side of the ravine as the flight neared the cliff. There, the narrow trail came up. Elsewhere there was nothing but the lip of the *pari* and then sheer descent. Already one or two, hard pressed, sensing the gulf at their heels, shot a despairing look over their shoulders and fell shrieking as the final blow sent them toppling.

A SHARP crackle of rifle fire sounded from the head of the gulch. Bristol and three of his shooters were emerging, led by the king's runner. Behind them leaped a dozen islanders, the first to cross the crater in pursuit. Now and then Bristol or one of his men would kneel and fire back. The men following had no rifles. Two of them dropped and then Loudon and the girl saw the sergeant and his squad toss away their guns and run for dear life.

"Out of cartridges," said Loudon. "We must cover them." He felt in his pockets the few remaining shells and handed his automatic to Mrs. Gower.

"Stay here, please," he ordered tersely, "and don't fire except in self-defense. We may need every bullet."

He had two extra clips full for the pistol but he retained those as, with the girl, he advanced up the ravine, keeping to the side hill where they could fire without fear of hitting Bristol or his men. The latter ran well but their pursuers gained. Ahead of the rest raced three warriors armed with clubs and javelins.

A well-aimed spear struck between the shoulder-blades of the man who fled by the side of the sergeant and he fell with the shaft sticking up from his back and swaying

like a pendulum. It was no easy task for Loudon or Serena to hit the leaping, dodging targets while they hurled rocks and clumps of brush. As they pushed on, the slopes became steeper and forced them to descend to the center of the gulch.

Bristol blundered by them, running heavily, blood streaming from his forehead. The man just behind him tripped and, with a yell, a warrior jumped for him, bringing down his club with a sickening thud. Loudon fired and the bullet struck fairly the top of the savage's bowed head, ranging through brain to spine and sending the man headlong on his victim. His two allies were close up and Loudon pulled trigger again. There was no response. He had fired his last cartridge. He heard a sort of sob from the girl.

"I've fired my last," she said.

"So have I. Run, for —— sake!"

The first warrior was upon him. He clutched his rifle by the barrel and swung it. The native parried it with a blow from his club that broke the gunstock off short and left Loudon's arms tingling with momentary paralysis.

The warrior's club lofted again and Loudon stooped swiftly, diving in at the other's knees and bringing him down heavily, springing free and grabbing the club of the man he had just shot. It was of heavy ironwood, beaked with a deeply imbedded shell, so beautifully balanced that it seemed to weigh no more than a cane.

The savage had rolled swiftly over and was up again but Loudon's blow descended on his shoulder-blade, the cone of the shell tearing through the flesh and shattering the bone. As he pitched forward, Loudon brought up his mace backhanded and smashed home just above the ear.

His soul had jumped back centuries, the spirit of his wild, sea-roving ancestor was strong within him and he exulted in the fury of the fight. His teeth were clenched and his lips drawn back while he caught himself shouting incoherent syllables as the next warrior lunged at him with a stabbing spear. He side-stepped it as he would a blow in the boxing ring and whirled his new-found weapon down upon the man's forearm.

The spear fell but the savage slid in and Loudon felt his arms about his ribs, lithe and unbreakable as strips of tempered steel. He tore at them but the man's body was oiled and his fingers slipped on the taut muscles while his ribs cracked and he could feel his feet lifting from the ground.

Over the other's shoulder his dimming eyes saw three more warriors only a few yards away and beyond them a hazy body of men tumbling over the rim of the crater. He could taste blood in his throat, his brain reeled—he was a child in the arms of the islander.

Suddenly the warrior gave a great gasp and the grip of his arms relaxed, still ringing Loudon as the other wilted first to his haunches and then to the ground. Loudon, dizzy with the pressure on his lungs, stepped back, forcing his will to clear his choked arteries. His sight came back and strength returned with gulps of fresh air.

Serena stood beside him, a javelin in her hand, the blade red with the blood of the native who lay writing feebly with a gash in his side below the ribs. A spear sung between them and thudded into the dirt. Loudon's shadow, lengthened before the rising sun, almost reached the hurtling body of the nearest warrior. Two more were at his heels.

Loudon had lost his club, he could not defend them both. In his swift look for the weapon he saw a fragment of lava loose upon the soil. It was roughly spherical and about the size of a baseball. He picked it up and snapped it from him. It struck the islander squarely between the eyes just as a spear left his hand, and the man crashed down like a log. His fellow tripped over him and the third half fell at the human hurdle while Loudon turned and grasped the girl's hand, shouting to her to run.

They fled down the gulch spurred by shouts behind them. The sergeant had reached the main force which was fighting far down the ravine. Midway Mrs. Gower awaited them, clutching the automatic which she handed back to Loudon as, scattering her dignity to the winds, she picked up her skirts and sprinted.

So far, the day was Rotorua's. As the three came close they could see his men leaping on the edge of the precipice, striking blows at despairing foes who reeled on the verge and then fell headlong. Once in a while two went down interlocked in a death grapple, whirling into the gulf. Some thirty of the king's men remained the victors. The rest of their force, and practically all of Toruki's opposing section, were either

stretched upon the dirt of the gulch or shapeless lumps at the bottom of the cañon Rotorua had made good his word, he had driven them over the cliff.

Loudon looked for the king. His men were crowding fast to the right where the trail led into the cañon. Half-way down the ravine came the rest of the revolutionists, three white men among them, firing intermittently. With Serena and Mrs. Gower, Loudon had reached the trail head and stood waiting their turn to descend the narrow track.

He heard a shout and saw Rotorua striding down the hillside. His quarter-staff was gone and he carried the little ax. His chest was crimson with blood, his loincloth was a mere strip of torn rag, soaked scarlet, but he appeared unconscious of injury as he crashed through the bushes, beating them with his weapon.

A figure sprang out from a tangle of leaves and stems and started to flee toward the oncoming horde. Rotorua leaped high above a clump and howled at the fugitive as he chased him.

It was Toruki. He limped as he ran, there was a gash in one calf. The black tresses of his girdle were matted with blood and his wig of beards was awry. Fear sped him and he gained. The king halted, straightened for a moment and hurled the ax.

It shot through the air like a stone from a sling and the keen blade sank into the base of the wizard's skull at its junction with the neck. For a few failing strides Toruki staggered on under his own impetus, to fall with outstretched arms, dead before he reached the ground.

Rotorua wheeled, sent out a defiant bellow to his yelling enemies and came heavily toward the path. His men were now well on the way down. Serena had just left Loudon's side to start the descent.

"Hurt, king?" asked Loudon.

The monarch stared at him for a moment as if he failed to recognize him, then he laughed.

"No, white man. Nothing but what heal quick. More quick than hole in Toruki's head. What I tell you? I splitum like coconut. I kill him with the ax you gave me. *Eyah*, Laudoni! It was a good fight and you fought like *arii*. *Eyah!* Now we go along quick. Bimeby we stop those others."

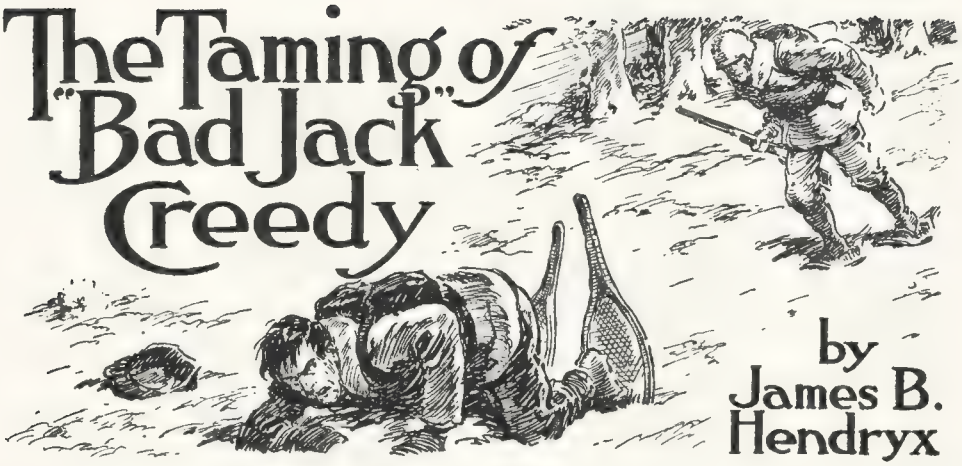
"I've got my pistol yet," said Loudon. "Isn't there a bend in the trail?"

"Too many they come," said the king. "Bimeby I show you place. Now better we hurry."

As Loudon descended below the level of the cliff he could see the runners a bare two hundred yards away—Elder, Griffin and Brewster were with them. He scrambled down the steep pitch, Rotorua bringing up the rear. The trail angled sharply in a zigzag and soon a shoulder of rock protected them from any downward fire, difficult at the best by the sheer drop of the cliff.

TO BE CONCLUDED

The Taming of "Bad Jack" Creedy



by James B. Hendryx

Author of "The Big Flash"

WHEN John Enger struck pay dirt on a small tributary of White River, the inevitable stampede followed, and men flocked by the hundreds into the Klotassin country.

A new gold trail took its toll of lives, while back on the Yukon, steamboat men raved, coal-mines closed down, trading companies ran their stores short-handed, and bosses and superintendents of the big dredge companies raged impotently, or stalked gloomily about the deserted buildings and idle dredges.

For in the gold country men will toil at their work, contented with their jobs and satisfied with their wage, and then, suddenly, comes the whispered news of a strike on some far distant creek or river. Men drop their tools and crowd about the bearer of the tale. Dull eyes gleam. Jaws clamp tight. And questions are followed by answers, jerked out in quick, tense sentences.

The crowd breaks up into small excited groups. Hurried partnerships are formed. An insistent, clamoring mob, fighting and gouging for place, crowds the paymaster's window. Trail-packs are thrown together in a frenzy of haste and the meat-eaters are off on the trail of gold.

Such was the White River stampede. And the valley of the little creek, upon the head-waters of which John Enger struck gold, was transformed in a day to a valley of tents and of camp-fires, a valley whose sands bristled with the stakes of the greed-crazed miners.

And on the heels of the big stampede, in the interest of law and order, came big Sergeant Jim McGovern, Corporal Blaine, and "Rookie" Adair—B Division's very newest recruit—the "mere boy" who is loved by the bearded men of the big country.

For they remember how, when the *Sally West* heeled over on her side and settled to the bottom of the river, the "kid" refused to climb aboard a convenient piece of wreckage, but remained to lash the unconscious form of his father, the *Sally West's* engineer, to a section of superstructure.

And they knew that because the meager flat could not bear the weight of two, the boy struck out for shore and was picked up hours later more dead than alive. Old Man Adair was pulled from the river, ten miles farther down, dead.

The kid then went down to Dawson where he sought out the Assistant Commissioner of the Mounted. Because the assistant commissioner had known Old Man Adair, and had heard the story of the wreck of the *Sally West*, he used his discretion, waived the "age twenty-two" clause, and enrolled the boy in the service.

THREE months later, the White River stampede broke, and Rookie Adair was detailed into the Klotassin.

The officers had been many days upon the trail. Upon their arrival at the big camp they proceeded to make snug for the Winter.

For the White River stampede was a Fall stampede. The creeks and rivers were

freezing at night along their edges, and sourdoughs, wise in the ways of the North, were preparing for the snow, and after staking their claims, immediately turned to the building of comfortable quarters. But many there were whose inexperience was blatantly advertised by the slovenly, makeshift shelters they had thrown together in their mad haste to "get into the gravel."

Among these inexperienced men moved the three officers, warning, advising, and in many cases even assisting them to prepare for the inevitable. Thus it was that Sergeant McGovern, accompanied by Rookie Adair paused to speak to four men who were eating supper beside an open fire in the lee of a light shelter-tent.

"Hey, you fellers," grinned the sergeant good-naturedly, "do you think this here country is a Summer resort? Here it is 'way into October and the big snow on you any day, and you layin' 'round in the shade of a rag 'twouldn't keep the cold off'n a husky dog. Get busy now and build yourselves somethin' to live in. There ain't no one goin' to steal your claims."

The four men glowered sullenly, and something in the eyes of one who appeared to be the leader, caused the sergeant to scrutinize him closely. Suddenly another, the youngest of the four spoke up.

"Suppose you mind your own business," he said with an air of vaunting bravado. "I guess folks can live like they want to, can't they? I've heard tell of you fellows, over acrost the line. You ain't such a much. Leastways you don't look good to me."

McGovern regarded the younger man with a tolerant sneer.

"Oh, so you're one of them tin horns from acrost the line, are you?"

"Tin horn, eh. You call me a tin horn? Say, I guess you don't know who I am?"

McGovern laughed.

"No, can't say as I do," he admitted. "But you needn't mind tellin' me. I ain't got no time for nonsense."

"Oh, you ain't eh," retorted the other. "Well I'll just tell you anyway. I'm 'Bad Jack' Creedy. That's who I am. And I don't need no nurse to tell me how to go to bed, neither, see?"

"Yes," answered McGovern, "I see."

And again he glanced sharply at the other man who was scowling his evident disapproval of Creedy's outburst. Then without a word the two officers passed on.

When they were beyond ear-shot the leader's scowl changed quickly to a grin. And with a swift wink toward the others, he addressed Bad Jack in a tone of admiration:

"That's the way to hand it to him, kid. These Canucks over here have got it into their heads that their Mounted is all to the good. But over acrost the line we know better. I've run up against 'em before. Many a head of stock I've run acrost into Montana, right under their nose. An' I never got caught neither."

The youth swelled visibly under the man's evident approval.

"They'll have to go some to get us," he said airily. "Gee, I'm glad I happened to fall in with you fellows, or I might have been working for wages yet over in the Tetling Mines."

"Ain't nothin' in workin' for wages," assented the man hastily. "This gulch is full of men that has worked for wages. You just wait a couple of days till we can slip around and glom onto a poke or two, and every last man of 'em 'll cache their wages in the tradin' company's safe. Then as soon as it snows, we'll pour a little soup in the door and hit for the line. 'Tain't over twenty or twenty-five mile. Then we can split up and lose ourselves over on the Tanana."

"Sure," assented Bad Jack, "we'll show the Mounted up if we can only get to the line."

"Get to the line," growled the other. "How can we help but get to the line. We'll pull off the job in the snow-storm. And with the snow coverin' our tracks, we can make twenty-five mile with a twelve-hour start. I got four pair of rackets cached over in the timber."

"I never walked on snow-shoes," ventured Bad Jack, doubtfully.

"That don't make no difference. Same as any other kind of walkin'. Just put 'em on and hike out. Still, if you don't want to be in on this, you don't need to. I ain't strong for no chechako nohow. But I took a chance on you, 'cause I says to myself 'There's a kid,' I says, 'that's got somethin' to him.' "

" 'Course, I'm in on it," cried the other, flushing. "Didn't I tell you I'd stick."

"That's all right," laughed the man. "You got a good head on you kid, and you got the nerve."

DAYS passed and the expected snow did not come.

Several miners visited the police tent and reported the loss of their money. News of this petty thievery spread throughout the camp and the men placed their money in the little iron safe of the trading-company's big tent. In every instance the thefts had occurred in the daytime, and the three officers patrolled unceasingly among the tents.

One morning as the three officers were eating breakfast before the little tent, Bad Jack Creedy passed with a rifle over his shoulder. McGovern hailed him. The young fellow paused, and eyed the three officers with a tolerant grin.

"Where'd you get your nick-name, kid?" asked McGovern suddenly.

"Tetling, over acrost the line. Where they ain't afraid to carry guns—an' use 'em, too, for that matter."

"How old are you? An' how long did you stay in Tetling?"

"I'm eighteen. I stayed there six months, an' I let 'em see right off the reel I carried just as big a gun as any man in camp."

"So they got to callin' you Bad Jack, eh. An' you never caught on, I suppose, that they was kiddin' you? That you're prob'ly the rawest thing in the shape of a chechako that ever hit a camp? No wonder the boys strung you along."

The young fellow flushed.

"Is that so?" he exploded defiantly. "And that's why, I suppose, when the news of this strike hit Tetling, Dick Sloan picked me out for one of his partners?"

McGovern nodded.

"Yep," he said, "that's why. Your partner calls himself Dick Sloan, eh. Well, that ain't his name. I've seen him somewhere before, but I can't place him. Whoever he is, you better cut loose from him, kid. I don't know what his game is, but your Dick Sloan outfit ain't here for no good—I know that much.

"An' I know this, too—that when the time comes for 'em to duck from under, you're goin' to be left holdin' the bag. That's what they brought you along for. I'm tellin' you this for your own good. You're no bad actor. You're just a kid that's got a wrong start. I've run acrost a few of your kind. Most always they don't get this far. Just listen for a minute an' see if I can't give it to you pretty straight.

"It starts about the time you begin playin' hookey from school. You an' some of your pals slip round amongst the alleys, smokin' cigarets and readin' dime novels. Then you get acquainted with other fellers that's be'n runnin' the alleys till the dime novel and cigaret stage has lost its excitement. They show you how to shoot craps, and how when you're unlucky you can always get another stake, by hookin' lead pipe an' old brass an' sellin' it to the junk-men.

"Along 'bout this time you start rushin' the can amongst the lumber piles an' warehouses. Here's where you begin pickin' up with the bums, an' the yeggs, an' you learn a lot of deviltry, that you ain't got the nerve to try on for yourself.

"There's too many police in this country, you say. Now if I was out West where there is plenty of stages, where everybody travels the road, with 'bout a million dollars in gold-dust in each pants pocket, I'd have a snap. All a fellow needs is a fast horse and a forty-five revolver and a little nerve. It's a cinch.

"Then you buy more novels an' read up about Diamond Dick, an' Black Bart, an' Kid Curry, an' the rest of the stickups. Then you put it up to your pals. But the West looks a long ways off an' they ain't got the grit. You try to argue 'em into it for a few days, but they're plumb yeller an' they'd ruther stage around the lumber piles talkin' with the bums an' the yeggs.

"So one bright mornin', all by your lonesome, you hop a freight. You ain't got no fast horse nor no gun, an' you don't know where you're goin', but you got the nerve, or you think you have, an' that 'mounts to the same thing. A couple of weeks later you're out West. You get a job in a sheep camp or a loggin' gang. An' you work three or four months till you get the lay of the land, an' enough money to buy an outfit.

"'Bout that time you get wised up to the fact that you ain't noticed no stage-coaches, an' the fellows that travel the trail ain't got no oncommon bulge to their pants pockets that looks like a gold-mine. 'The West ain't what it used to be,' you decide, 'I got to go further. Alaska,' you say, 'that's the place for me. Every one's got gold up in Alaska.'

"So you keep on workin' till you get your stake saved up an' then you hit for Alaska. First thing you do, you heel yourself with a forty-five. Skagway gives you kind of a

jolt, when you can't take your brand-new gun over the pass. So you come on to Valdez.

"Then you drift among the camps workin' further an' further into the country. An' always posin' with your blusterin' an' bluffin' as a bad man. You don't fool no one. You don't make no friends. The boys call you Bad Jack an' they string you along, but you take it all in earnest till you really get to believin' you are a bad man.

"Right there you hit the danger line. The history of most of the 'Bad Jacks' winds up about there. They pick out some quiet, doleful-minded cuss that is wearin' overalls an' mindin' his own business, an' start somethin'. Couple hours later, after the last of the gravel is kind of rounded up over the bad man the boys goes back to take a drink. An' the kindest thing that's said about him is, that the '—— fool got what was comin' to him.'

"Take you now. Tell me, how many friends have you got in Tetling? You ain't got none, have you? You knew that, an' it kind of got under your hide. 'Posin' as the camp's bad man don't get you no friends. But you started in that way an' you got to play your string out.

"Then along comes Dick Sloan an' he sizes you up in about a minute. He's got some game or other up his sleeve, an' he knows he can use you, so he starts in to be friends with you. He tells you about the White River stampede. He kids you 'long a little an' you throw in with him. Why? Because here's a friend—the first one you've found. An' here you are."

McGovern paused and regarded the youth intently. Bad Jack had listened to every word, and as he listened his face was a study. His truculence changed to interest, interest to a foolish shamefaced grin, and at the conclusion the grin gave place to a swift scowl of anger.

"Now don't get mad, son," said the sergeant, noting the change. "If I've called the turn, you know—I don't—I was only guessin'. But if I did, ain' it a pretty good time to stop an' get a-holt of yourself? Because, believe me, I can tell you the rest of the story—an' it won't take long, neither."

For just an instant the younger man hesitated, then with a growling, unintelligible retort, turned on his heel and the three officers watched in silence until he disappeared in the edge of the timber.

"YOU had him goin', Jim," said Rookie Adair, as the figure of Bad Jack passed from sight. "Gee, he's a fool."

"Yes, he's a fool, kid, but he's got some stuff in him somewheres, or he wouldn't have had the nerve to push on into the big country. It's just as I told. He's got a wrong start, an' I'm hopin' we can bring him to his senses, before he gets in bad. We'll try to work him around to our way of thinkin'. What'll you bet that a year from now that kid will be ashamed he was ever called 'Bad Jack' Creedy?"

"I don't know," grumbled Corporal Blaine. "Once a crook, always a crook."

"Not by a long shot," broke in Rookie. "I don't believe that for a minute. Besides, that fellow isn't a crook yet."

"No, but he's headed that way mighty fast."

"Yes, and it's up to us to head him off," retorted the boy. "Jim's right. He hasn't got a bad eye. He's just a fool. And I could see Jim's words got under his hide. If we could get him away from that bunch——"

Suddenly the boy's eyes sparkled.

"Let's pinch 'em for 'vags,'" he cried. "Then we can take our time with Bad Jack. The way it is now, with these fellows around to call him a piker, he'll be ashamed to quit them."

"You're right there, son," answered McGovern. "Only we can't pick 'em up for 'vags.' They've got claims staked an' they've got an outfit."

During the morning, the weather thickened and the air was heavy with the feel of snow. Work on the claims was all but abandoned, while men hurriedly put the finishing touches upon their camps. Toward noon the storm broke, and the whole world became a dancing riot of flakes that whirled and eddied and covered the ground with a thick, soft carpet of white.

All through the night the snow fell. Early the following morning, Rookie Adair was awakened by a frantic clawing and scratching, at the flap of the tent. McGovern and Blaine still snored in their blankets. Suddenly, an excited face was thrust into the interior. It was the face of Hodson, the company's storekeeper.

"Hey, get up quick!" the man roared. "Some one's blowed the safe."

McGovern and Blaine blinked sleepily at the face in the doorway.

"Safe," cried Rookie. "What safe?"

"Why, the safe down to the store. We brung it up in a polin' boat to keep the cash in. An' not only that—when the money begun to be stole out of the tents, most of the boys brung their cash over to be locked up, too. There was clost to sixty thousan' dollars in that safe—an' every cent of it gone!"

As the man talked, the three officers climbed hastily into their clothing, and a moment later followed Hodson to the canvas store, at the lower end of the gulch.

"Why didn't you tell us you had a lot of cash in your safe?" growled McGovern. "We didn't even know there was such a thing as a safe in camp."

"I don't know," whined Hodson. "Never thought of it. Never expected no one to blow a safe up here, nohow."

Inside the store a group of excited miners had collected about the rifled safe.

"The fellows that did that knew their business," said McGovern, after a thorough examination of the wrecked strong-box. "They did it in the early part of the night too—for they left no trail."

As the news of the daring robbery spread over the camp, other men flocked to the tent, and ugly mutterings ran through the crowd. Some one produced a rope and a determined group edged toward the doorway. McGovern turned suddenly upon them.

"Cut out that talk," he said sharply. "We're here to handle this case. We know who blew the safe. We know they headed for the line, an' we'll get 'em too, an' they'll get what's comin' to 'em. But, they'll get it accordin' to law, an' not by verdict of no miners' meetin'—an' that goes! Here you sand hog—drop that rope!"

For a moment the crowd seemed to hesitate. Rookie, from his place at McGovern's side allowed his eyes to travel over the faces of the men. And he noted with satisfaction that the sourdoughs, were on the side of the police.

"Come on boys," cried the youngster. "Jim's right, and you know it. This is our job. It's what we're paid for."

Somewhere in the crowd a man laughed.

"Kid's right," exclaimed a deep voice. "He's there. The Mounted can handle 'em."

AFTER a hasty breakfast the three officers fastened on their snowshoes, and with several days' provisions in their packs, struck into the timber.

"Seein' as it's quit snowin'," observed the sergeant, "we'll hit west about ten or fifteen mile an' split up and hike north an' south. It's a cinch they hit for the line, an' it's a cinch they couldn't of covered more than ten or fifteen mile in the night. After that, the trail will be plain enough for a blind man to follow."

For two hours the three pushed steadily westward on the long lift of the divide. Suddenly, McGovern, who was in the lead, stopped abruptly and stared at a curious depression in the surface of the deep snow.

"What do you make of it, kid?" he asked, as Rookie Adair and Corporal Blaine halted beside him. Rookie scrutinized the shallow trough, whose unbroken surface was only slightly lower than the surface of the surrounding snow.

"Snow-shoe trail," he answered, "but why is it heading north? And why does it run along the side of the ridge?"

The sergeant grinned.

"Can't you guess the answer?" he asked.

Suddenly, Rookie straightened up. "It's Bad Jack," he cried, "and he's lost."

McGovern nodded.

"That's right, son," he answered, "he's only be'n in the country six months. Prob'ly never had a pair of rackets on before. You see, his pals had that all figured out. They knew he couldn't keep up with 'em. Figured he'd blunder round all night and half the next day before he petered out. An' they figured we'd waste enough time followin' his trail to let 'em over the divide.

"You see they got it in their heads that onct they cross the line they're safe, as far as the Mounted is concerned. An' when we come onto 'em they'll put up a big yell about their rights. But, shucks. Inspector Constantine followed a fellow for six months, nabbed him down in Mexico, an' brung him back by way of Halifax. As for us wastin' time on this trail, they got another guess comin.'

"One of us has got to hunt up this Bad Jack party, though, before he gets bushed an' froze or kills his fool self. An' the others keeps on after the gang."

The sergeant paused and gazed speculatively at his two subordinates.

"You go after Bad Jack, kid," he said, at length. "An' when you get him, take him on to Dawson. Take him straight acrost. There ain't nothin' will do him so much good as a hundred-mile hike. You got grub enough to take you to old man Conrad's, on Ladue Creek. Then cut acrost to Sixty-mile an' on down the river an' don't be easy on him, neither. It's just what he needs."

"What charge shall I place against him?" asked the boy.

McGovern grinned.

"That's up to you," he said. "If I know anythin' about it, it will take you a good week to make that hundred miles, an' by the time you get to Dawson, you'll know how his heart is."

Rookie found no serious difficulty in following Bad Jack's trail. It was a curious trail—aimless and circuitous, leading in and out among thickets, over logs, up hill and down. Evidently, the chechako's one thought was to keep moving, regardless of obstacles or the conformation of the country.

During the afternoon the trail grew fresher and the signs told that the man had fallen frequently. Halting upon the top of a low ridge, the boy saw smoke ascending from the dense thicket a mile ahead, and abandoning the floundering trail, he cut straight through the timber. The camp was easily located, and after a few moments of reconnoitering the youngster slipped noiselessly to the fire.

Rolled in a single blanket close to the blaze lay Bad Jack. A rifle of heavy caliber leaned against a near-by tree, and three woolen socks and a pair of moccasins decorated some sticks stuck into the snow by the fireside. The other sock with the foot burned off lay smoking at the edge of the coals.

Rookie threw the rifle as far as he could and watched it bury itself in the deep snow.

It was late in the afternoon, and the boy made camp, without waking Bad Jack. He selected a spot where the trees thinned, and at once proceeded to make himself comfortable for the night. Making sure that there were no overhanging branches above him, he scraped the snow from a space six or eight feet in diameter and built his fire. Then, with an abundance of wood within easy reach, he spread his blankets and sat down to his supper of bacon and tea.

The boy grinned as he glanced toward Bad Jack. He knew it would not be long before the other would awaken through sheer discomfort. The roaring fire the chechako had built beneath the branches of a snow-laden spruce was getting in its work and water was dropping upon the sleeping man's blanket. Another sock tumbled into the blaze. Rookie noted also that Bad Jack had neglected to gather a supply of fire-wood, and that the *muckluks* which hung close to the fire were shriveled into hard lumps.

THE "BAD MAN" awoke with a start, sat up, and stared in bewilderment from his soaked blanket to the dying fire. Then slowly and stiffly he arose to his feet, growling at the sight of the charred socks. With chattering teeth and much groaning and muttering the chechako drew the remaining pair of coarse socks over his blistered feet.

His eye suddenly fell upon Rookie seated warm and comfortable upon his blankets close beside his little fire. He recognized the boy instantly, and swiftly his eyes sought the tree against which his rifle had leaned. He returned his gaze to Rookie who sat apparently oblivious to his presence.

"Well," he growled at length. "What you doing here?"

"Camping," answered Rookie, laconically. "I was waiting for you to wake up."

"And now I'm awake, what you goin' to do about it?"

"Nothing. We'll just camp here till morning, then we'll hit the trail."

"Where to?"

"Dawson."

"Dawson," exclaimed the other. "I ain't goin' to Dawson."

"Yes, you are," answered the boy. "That's just exactly where you are going."

"You mean you're goin' to arrest me?" There was a contemptuous note in the chechako's voice.

Rookie grinned.

"Nope, I ain't going to; you're arrested already."

Bad Jack laughed.

"So you think you can take me to Dawson, do you?"

Rookie nodded.

"We start at daylight," he answered. "And if I were you I'd get busy on those *muckluks*. Because a hundred-mile hike in

your stocking feet ain't going to be any snap."

"A hundred miles," cried the other. "I couldn't walk a hundred miles in a month on snow-shoes. My feet's all blistered now."

Again Rookie grinned.

"And they'll be blistered worse than that when you get there," he answered cheerfully. "But, you're going just the same."

Bad Jack made no reply, but fingered gingerly the shriveled *muckluks*.

"These here ain't no good," he ventured at length. "They're all knotted up."

"Soak 'em and stretch 'em and then stuff 'em with brush," advised Rookie. "Then dry 'em slow."

The other glowered resentfully, and picking up the *muckluks* dabbled them in the shallow puddle of water that had collected about the edge of his fire.

"Got any grub?" he snarled after a while.

"Sure," replied Rookie, "haven't you?"

"Naw, the others packed the grub."

"And pulled out on you, eh? Fine bunch to throw in with."

Bad Jack finished stuffing spruce twigs into the *muckluks*, and picking up his ice-stiffened blanket, limped painfully through the snow to the boy's fire. Rookie fried some bacon, which the other wolfed down greedily.

After his meal, Bad Jack lapsed into silence. Presently Rookie arose, and scraping his fire to the lower end of the cleared rectangle, threw boughs over the warmed spot and spread his blankets for the night. Then tossing an armful of wood upon the fire he "crawled in."

Bad Jack eyed him furtively and glanced resentfully at his own blanket which had frozen stiff.

"Better roll in with me," suggested the boy at length. "You'll sleep better."

The chechako glanced at him in surprise, but accepted the invitation eagerly. And soon the two were lying side by side between the blankets.

A long silence was broken at length by Bad Jack.

"Say kid, you never put no handcuffs on me."

"Uh huh," replied the boy sleepily. "You'll sleep better without 'em."

"But," persisted the other, "what's to hinder me from—from pulling out on you in the night?"

Rookie laughed.

"Where to?" he asked.

"Why—why acrost the line of course."

"All right," answered the boy sleepily. "Go ahead. See you in the morning."

Bad Jack was puzzled. He planned his escape in detail. But the snow-trail had been too much for him and next morning when he awoke, Rookie had prepared breakfast.

The prisoner's muscles were stiff and ached fearfully, and the boy noticed that he winced as he worked his swollen and blistered feet into the *muckluks*.

"How did you find things across the line?" Rookie asked cheerfully.

Upon receiving no answer he continued:

"It's about eight miles to old man Conrad's on Ladue Creek, and it's going to be a pretty tough trail for you, but we ought to make it by noon. Then we'll lay up for a couple of days and doctor your feet."

"Eight miles," groaned Bad Jack. "I couldn't walk eight rods. I'll never make it."

"Oh, yes, you will," encouraged the boy. "You've got to. We can't stay here."

"S'pose I won't go?" growled Bad Jack surlily. "You can't drag me, nor carry me."

"No," grinned Rookie. "I won't try. I've got to hike on after breakfast. Maybe your friends will come back and hunt you up. Most likely, though, the *four*-legged wolves will find you first."

For a long time Bad Jack sat gazing silently into the fire.

"I—I ain't got no friends," he said gruffly.

Rookie refilled his cup with tea and looked straight into his eyes.

"Buck up, Jack," he said. "Maybe you'll find friends where you least expect 'em."

That eight-mile trail was a trail of torture for Bad Jack Creedy. At every step his blistered feet burned as if packed in live coals, and a hundred times he was on the point of quitting, but always the boy urged him on, helping him to his feet when he sprawled awkwardly in the snow, and, with the aid of a light pole, easing him up and down the steep sides of ridges. And long after noon when they reached the lone cabin on Ladue Creek, the prisoner barely managed to stagger through the door and throw himself in a huddled heap upon the bunk. Old man Conrad had thrown in

with the Enger Creek stampede, and the two had the cabin to themselves.

Rookie produced his first-aid kit, and showed Bad Jack how to care for his feet, but it was three days before the prisoner was able to travel.

"We'll start for Sixty-mile in the morning," announced the boy as the two sat about the little stove, on the evening of the third day.

Bad Jack stared a long time at the stove.

"The big feller had it doped out right," he ventured, after a long silence. "He sure called the turn. I've been doin' a lot of thinkin' the last four days, kid. Sure wished I'd of listened to him instead of them others —but it's too late now. You've treated me white, kid. It's like he said—I got a wrong start. But that wasn't nobody's fault but mine.

"When you arrested me I made up my mind I wouldn't go to Dawson. But I've been thinkin' it over considerable and I figured if I did get away from you, it wouldn't get me nothin'. I'd always be on the run. I've had enough of trying to be a crook. Trouble with me is, I never done no thinkin' before. Guess where I'm goin' now though I'll have plenty of time to think things out.

"I ain't never been mixed up in no crooked work before. But that ain't nothin' to my credit—it was only because I never had a chance. I got it all doped out now. The best thing for me to do is to go down and own up to the judge and take my medicine. And when I get turned loose nobody won't have anythin' on me. I'll make me a new start. A man can't run straight less'n he starts straight, can he, kid?"

"No," Rookie answered, meeting his gaze squarely. "He can't. You said something, then, Jack."

He held out a small hand and the other gripped it firmly.

"Come on," said Bad Jack, "let's roll in, so as we can get an early start. I want to hurry up and get it over with."

AT DAWSON, the prisoner was hustled into a cell and Rookie Adair sought out the assistant commissioner with whom he was closeted for over an hour. When the interview closed the assistant commissioner reached for the telephone upon his desk and a few moments later a gray-haired man entered the room—a man who listened intently to what the assistant commissioner had to say, and asked Rookie a few curt questions.

"Bring the prisoner in," he ordered at length, and the boy hurried through the door and returned shortly with Bad Jack. The judge was the first to break the silence.

"What is your name?" he asked abruptly.

"Creedy" answered the prisoner. "Howard Creedy."

"Where do you live?"

"Chicago," answered the young man, "then Montana, then Tetling over on the Tanana, then I came over to the White River country."

"What did you go to the White River country for?"

The prisoner flushed.

"We figured there would be some one over there with money," he answered. "We thought we'd hold 'em up. Then we found out about the safe, an' we swiped a few pocketbooks out of the tents, so the men would deposit their money and things. Then we waited for the snow to cover up our tracks and blowed the door of the safe."

"It was a pretty smooth trick, wasn't it?" asked the judge sharply.

"That ain't the way it looks from here," answered Bad Jack.

"Were these your ideas? Did you think them out?"

Bad Jack shook his head.

"No sir, but I was in on the job and if it had worked I would have taken my share."

The judge's frown deepened.

"So you admit you were guilty of safe robbing?"

"Yes sir," answered Bad Jack firmly. "I do."

A constable entered with a telegram which he laid upon the Assistant Commissioner's desk. The officer read it and handed it to the judge.

"Your friends have been arrested," he said, turning to the prisoner.

"They ain't my friends," answered Bad Jack. "I thought they was, but I know different now. I ain't got no friends. There's only one reason, Judge, it's because I ain't earned none. You see, Judge, I thought it was a fine thing to be known as Bad Jack Creedy. I thought I was gettin' away with it, until the kid's pardner, the big feller, called the turn on me. Then, I begun to see what a fool I was.

"But somehow, it seemed like I'd gone too far to turn back. But the kid here, he tamed me. He never said nothin' much—just let me alone. But—I don' know—I guess it was just the way he done things. Went at 'em like he know'd what was what. My bluffs about gettin' away an' not comin' along didn't get his goat. He's a sure-enough sourdough an' I'm a piker, an' he showed me up proper.

"An' he's such a square kid an' he treated me so white that I got to likin' him, an' I made up my mind I'd come along without givin' him no trouble, an' own up fair and square an' take my medicine an' start all over."

The judge tugged at his gray mustache.

"Creedy," he said, "you have pleaded guilty to a very serious charge. Have you anything to say—any reason to advance why you should not go to prison?"

Bad Jack shook his head.

"No sir," he answered, "I guess not. You see, the big feller, he give me warnin' an' I didn't have sense enough to take it."

The judge nodded and cleared his throat.

"Young man," he began, "I believe you have spoken the truth. I do not believe you are a criminal at heart. You have the eyes of an honest man. Nevertheless my duty to this Territory compels me to sentence you to three years at hard labor."

The prisoner's face paled at the words, but he gritted his teeth and met unflinchingly the stern-eyed gaze of the judge, who continued after a long pause:

"However, upon certain recommendations earnestly advanced by Constable Adair and seconded by my friend the assistant commissioner, I am constrained to believe it no less than my duty to commute this sentence."

The judge reached for a pad of paper upon the desk and wrote rapidly for a few moments, while Bad Jack Creedy stared uncomprehendingly from face to face.

"You said," continued the judge gruffly, "that you had no friends."

He paused and pointed toward Rookie Adair.

"But, there stands one friend of yours, and I tell you right here, he is a friend worth having."

He turned toward the assistant commissioner.

"And there sits another friend, and he, also, is a friend worth having. And you will find that Sergeant McGovern, the big fellow as you call him, who tried to show you where your course was leading you, is also your friend."

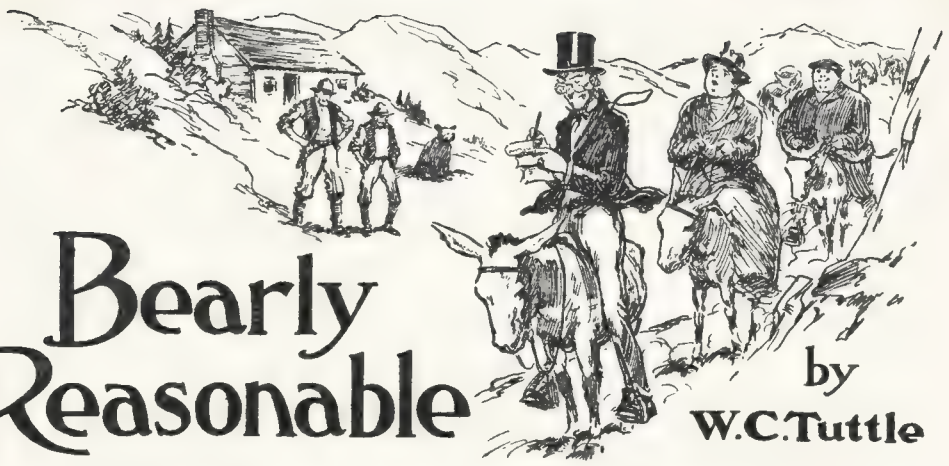
He extended the paper upon which he had written.

"Take this down to the superintendent of the C. K. N. Company, and I think he will give you a job."

The judge's voice suddenly lost its note of gruffness. He walked over and laid a hand on Bad Jack's shoulder.

"Son," he said, "I believe you intend to run straight. You have got to run straight—it's the only way. Whenever you feel like it, I wish you would come up to the house and talk things over with me, and I think, very probably, that you will find that *I* am one of your friends."

Bad Jack tried to stammer his thanks, choked up, and grasped the judge's hand, and then tightly clutching the paper, he turned toward the boy, who stood trim and neat in his service uniform, and the gray-haired judge and the stern-faced assistant commissioner watched in silence, as Rookie Adair and his prisoner left the room, arm in arm.



Bearly Reasonable

by W. C. Tuttle

Author of "Magpie—Diplomat," "Sixteen to One on Friday," etc.

"IKE," sez Magpie Simpkins, pointin' down th' trail, "th' feller what said, 'Th' worst is yet to come,' must 'a' meant that outfit comin' our way."

I takes uh good look and agrees. In th' lead is Ricky Henderson, on his calico bronc, and behind him is three figgers on burrows. Th' leadin' one looks like uh cross between uh Holy Roller proselyte and uh fence picket. Th' legs of th' critter is bent back at th' knees to keep its feet off th' ground, an th' rest of its body 'pears to have been soaked in starch before it seasoned.

It's wearin' uh swaller-tailed coat, buttoned at th' top, makin' it swell in th' breeze like th' wings of uh turkey-buzzard, and th' peaked, side-whiskered face which bobs at th' top is crowned with uh hard hat. It is also wearin' black-rimmed specs, and enough black ribbon floats from th' top to furnish mournin' fer uh wake.

Th' next in line is uh fe-male person, and uh glance shows that she ain't built fer neither speed nor comfort. Th' pore li'l burrow she's ridin' is wig-waggin' uh distress signal with its ears, and threatens to cave in at th' knees in uh short time.

Th' next in line is one uh them human carbuncles. He's so danged fat that his clothes ache, and he has to lift his yaller eyebrows plumb to th' top of his bald head to git his eyes open. When I first sees his face I'm inclined to git th' skin of uh aig to put on it and draw it to uh head.

Behind this caravan loiters five burros and they're so danged loaded down with plunder that all yuh can see is their ears. While me and Magpie stands on th' steps of our cabin, at th' Silver Threads mine, this aggregation peerades to uh standstill before us, and that she-packin' burro hee-haws with relief.

"Here we are," states Ricky, turnin' in his saddle and grinnin' at his followers.

"Thank goodness!" snorts th' fe-male. "I feel that I'm jolted to a shadow. Shall we dismount?"

"Ricky, yuh might make us used to yore friends, and tell us why you terminates th' peerade at this point," sez Magpie.

"This person," sez Ricky, pointin' at th' lean critter, "is Perfessor Phinney. Th' lady is his wife, and this here robust party is Doctor Doolittle. They're from th' East—" and then he turns to them:

"Ladies and gentlemen, this slender party with th' hairy upper lip is Magpie Simpkins, and th' bow-legged party beside him is Ike Harper, his mate. Now that yo're properly introduced I'll pilgrim back. *Au revoir.*"

"Yuh will—in uh hearse," snaps Magpie. "Come back here, yuh blamed coyote and explain why yuh shirks yore duty. What's th' great idea?"

"My duty is done," states Ricky. "These here persons desire to hire competent persons so I brings' em up here. Every man in Piperock holds up their hands and swears that they ain't competent, so what could I do? You and Ike shore must be. I reckon th' perfessor can tell yuh what he

wants, Magpie. I hates to deprive yuh of my company, but I'm uh right busy man."

"No depravity, Ricky," sez Magpie. "Run right along home."

And then he turns to th' outfit. Th' three of 'em are off their mounts, and busy rubbin' th' circulation back into their legs. I feels that th' perfessor has some chore, 'cause he has quite uh strip uh country to hear from.

"I—er—shall try and explain in a few words," sez th' perfessor, peekin' at us over th' tops of his specs. "I am up here to settle an argument between myself and Professor Manning. Isn't it queer what an argument between friends will bring forth?"

"Uh-huh," agrees Magpie. "She shore is. I've knowed six good men to git killed on th' spot, four more in th' pen, and dozens who have been crippled fer life over friendly arguments."

"How unique!" exclaims th' perfessor's heavier half. "How unique."

"Yes'm," agrees Magpie, "two of 'em was, but th' rest was jist common ordinary arguments."

"As I was—er—saying," continues th' perfessor, "I am up here to settle a friendly argument."

Th' question is?" asks Magpie.

"Do rattlesnakes and prairie-dogs live together in harmony, and will a female grizzly recognize its own offspring after it has been away from it for twenty-four hours."

"That's uh —— of uh reason fer comin' way up here!" snorts Magpie.

"Why didn't yuh write to me? I'd 'a' told yuh."

"That's what I said," cuts in th' human carbuncle. "When you told me about it I——"

"Doctor," pipes th' perfessor, "there's no use arguing with me. This is a serious question. Professor Manning's theory is wrong, and I am going to prove it."

"Yuh can't prove nothin' by uh rattler," objects Magpie. "Also, yuh got uh sweet chore on yore hands when yuh tries to git uh female grizzly to let yuh take its cub and——"

"Can't I believe my own eyes?" wails th' ol' pelican. "Can't I see these things?"

"My husband, being a scientist, is very observing," states Mrs. Perfessor.

"Also set in his ways," states th' doc, lightin' one uh them dude cigarets, which smells like th' place where uh circus has jist moved away. "All I hope is that I get some good shooting."

"If th' perfessor interviews uh fe-male grizzly and fambly, yuh shore stand uh good chance uh gittin' yore wish," sez I. "Unpack them long-sufferin' jackasses and make yoreself to home. Th' hills is yours."

"Unpack?" asks th' perfessor. "Do you mean to remove the impedimenta from the backs of our beasts of burden?"

"Bein' funny is a art," states Magpie, "but art ain't appreciated here in th' hills. Jist take th' plunder off them canaries, and settle down."

"But, my man, that's your duty. That's part of what I'm paying you for."

Magpie looks foolish like at me and then back at th' perfessor. Th' doc lifts his eyebrows to th' eaves of his face and manages to wiggle one eyelid until uh person would almost admit it was uh wink.

"Perfessor," sez Magpie, "I ain't yore man. I never seen yuh before, and I ain't worryin' about yuh in th' future. I never hired out to yuh, and I ain't acquainted with yore rollin' stock to th' extent that I wishes to remove their loads. Who wished yuh on to us anyway and why?"

Th' perfessor removes his hard hat and squints at Magpie.

"The—er—person who brought us up here informed me that you were perfectly competent. Was we misinformed?"

"Misinformed? No, ol'-timer, you was lied to. Sabe?"

"Th' fact of th' matter is this," states th' doc. "Professor Phinney wants to engage the services of you and Mister Harper. He is willing to pay you a reasonable amount for your services, and is also able to offer a substantial bonus in case you can help him prove or disprove his contention. Am I right, Professor?"

"Yeaus," drawls th' ol' coot.

He's uh funny ol' rooster. He allus sez "Yeaus" instead uh "Uh-huh." I don't reckon he ever figgered that th' Lord only give him one set uh vocal cords, or else he didn't care if he did wear 'em out early in life. Every danged word he orates sounds like th' letters had been carved out uh granite, and he was afraid to let 'em all fall to oncet fer fear some of 'em might git scratched or busted.

"Yuh might explain th' bonus part," sez Magpie.

"You see," sez th' perfessor, "for my own

personal satisfaction I would observe the home life of the rattlesnake and prairie-dog, but the most important is the test of the maternal instinct in the grizzly bear.

"I shall expect you to furnish me with the opportunity to carry out this experiment to a satisfactory conclusion, and in case you can do so to my satisfaction, I am willing to remunerate you to the extent of two hundred dollars each. Of course I am prepared to pay you each five dollars per day. Do you feel competent to assist me?"

MAGPIE sticks his thumbs into his belt, shifts his weight on to one leg, and squints at them burros.

"Ike," sez he, "remove th'—er—imped—imped—th' packs off them beasts uh burden."

And then to th' perfessor:

"Competent is my middle name. When it comes to th' maternal instinct of grizzly bears I feels as competent as uh hungry coyote in uh herd uh sick sheep. Ike is a authority on snakes and gophers, so between us I reckon you'll git enough material to last yuh a lifetime. What do yuh know about grizzlies?"

"Nothing at all," sez th' perfessor. "I fear that I wouldn't know one if I were to meet it. I'll admit it was a foolish argument, when neither Professor Manning nor myself are at all familiar with natural history, but it is things like this that lend zest to life. Am I right, Mister Simpson?"

"Simpkins," sez Magpie. "Uh-huh, I reckon it does. Yessir, I'd shore agree that it might. But, Perfessor, if I was in yore place, not bein' familiar with grizzlies, I'd shore side-step anythin' I met that wasn't familiar. There's one redeemin' feature about uh grizzly—he don't stop to argue. One or two uh them square-heads would put enough zest in uh man's life to keep him supplied fer right smart of uh time."

Well, that shore was some outfit. Them packs looks like uh travelin' banquet. There's three foldin' bunks, sleepin' bags, rubber bathtubs and most everything that uh man can't use in th' hills. Also there is enough fancy grub to feed uh roundup. I manages to git them things off th' jacks, and Magpie comes over and looks 'em over.

"My Gawd," sez he. "This is th' limit, hammered to uh sharp point. What'll we do with 'em, Ike?"

"Yore uh competent," sez I. "Don't ask me what to do, Magpie Simpson. Is th' perfessor's squaw goin' to git supper?"

"She is not, and yuh might call me by my right name. Th' perfessor sez that he was informed by Mister Henderson that Mister Harper is th' best culinary artist in th' State. Uh culinary artist is uh polite name fer uh bull cook, Ike."

"Sounds re-fined, anyway," I agrees. "But some uh these day's I'm goin' to git my meat-hooks on Ricky Henderson, and there's goin' to be sorrow in th' Henderson tribe. Culinary artist ——! Can't th' doctor cook?"

"Th' doctor can't do nothin', Ike. He informs me that th' one ambition in life is to hit somethin' with his shotgun. Sez he never had and never expects to, but he's game to keep on tryin'."

Pretty soon th' doc comes down from th' cabin, and sets down on one of th' packs. He dusts th' end of uh cigaret on his hand, and grins at me and Magpie.

"Some outfit, eh?" he sez. "What do yuh think of it?"

"Well," sez Magpie, "I knowed uh feller oncet what got hung fer sayin' what he thought, so with this one short remark I'll close—awful!"

"Exactly," agrees th' doc, explodin' uh cloud uh smoke that would asphyxiate uh gila monster. "I quite agrees with you. You see th' professor has a lot more money than any ordinary professor ought to have and if he wishes to spend it on a proposition like this it's none of our funeral."

"Th' first part of yore oration sounds sensible," sez Magpie, "but th' last line ain't exactly true. Knowin' th' natcheral disposition of uh fe-male grizzly, I'd say that it might be our funeral. Jist because we're merely accessories to th' fact don't affect th' gray matter in th' skull of uh she-grizzly.

"All men looks alike to her. Mebby she'd shy at th' perfessor, but I'm bettin' that uh rear view of th' ol' boy goin' up uh tree or doin' th' vanishin' act over uh hill might fool uh mad grizzly into thinkin' she was chasin' uh real, honest-to-grandma man. Uh course she'd find out her mistake, but by that time it's too late to rectify it. No self-respectin' rattler'd bite him, either, but yuh got to figger that nobody ever met uh self-respectin' rattler. No, sir, I reckon we got to close-herd th' perfessor."

"I'd be there with my shotgun," grins th'

doc. "Mebby I could hit uh bear with it. That would be some satisfaction."

"And it wouldn't bother th' bear," sez I. "If yuh feels like tryin' out that two-tunneled spray-weapon on uh bear, take this advice: Try one barrel on th' bear and th' other on yoreself. Mebby it's jist uh li'l out uh place fer uh stranger to tell uh feller how to pass out uh this here vale uh tears, but uh scatter-gun don't compare with uh grizzly when it comes to messy-lookin' corpses. Them animiles shore do admire to take yuh apart."

I cooked supper that night. One thing in my favor was th' fact that th' perfessor's wife is too hungry and tired to make any suggestions. I ain't no dog-gone French cook, but I shore hates to have uh fe-male person tell me how to cook beans. We worries through supper without no casualties, and after we gits through, Mrs. Perfessor goes to bed on my bunk, and th' rest of us sets out in front of th' cabin and smokes uh while.

"My man," sez th' perfessor to Magpie, "it is my desire to investigate the grizzly theory tomorrow morning. I suppose you are prepared to guide me to the lair of a fairly good specimen?"

"Shore," sez Magpie. "Uh course I'll have to look over my field notes uh while before I can locate edzactly th' specimen yuh needs. Uh course yuh wants uh grizzly with uh grizzly offspring."

"Yeaus," drawls th' ol' pelican. "Yeaus, certainly. Quite naturally a grizzly would have a grizzly offspring."

"Natcherally," agrees Magpie. "But yuh often finds 'em with black or brown cubs. Yuh see, Perfessor, uh she-grizzly is uh motherly ol' thing, and when she finds uh female black or brown bear which don't treat their li'l ones properly she jist natcherally adopts 'em."

"Quite commendable," nods th' perfessor. "I must make a note of it. Such information is quite valuable. But don't the other bears object to losing the custody of their offsprings?"

"Quite useless," drawls Magpie. "As I remarked before, uh grizzly won't argue."

"I have a feeling that this trip is going to furnish some material for the scientists to ponder over," laughs th' doc, gittin' up and throwin' away his camel-hair cigaret. "I must see that my shotgun is in good working order."

"Did yuh ever shoot any fool-hens?" I asks.

Th' doc grins at me in uh wise sort of uh way and replies:

"Mister Harper, I may be a poor shot, but I'm not that much of a tenderfoot, so don't try that old joke on me, please."

Most of 'em won't bite on th' fool-hen stunt, fer th' simple reason that there ain't no joke about fool-hens. Now, if yuh spoke about snow-snakes they'd stay all Winter to git uh specimen.

It wa'n't edzactly what you'd call chivalry that prompts us to give up our cabin to our employers that night. When uh two hundred and fifty pound fe-male occupies yore three by six bunk, and fills th' air with snores which resembles th' grunts of uh hungry bear trying to coax uh fat grub out of uh rotten stump, it's jist human nature to grab uh blanket and move out in th' brush. Th' doc crawls into his sleepin'-bag alongside th' cabin, but me and Magpie holes up down near th' crick.

THAT night I wonders out-loud, in Magpie's hearin', what are we goin' to do? Also I mentions in my oration that any man what ain't got no more sense than to tie up with uh rattle-headed pardner, not mentionin' any names, but givin' uh fair description, ought to die early in life in self-defense.

"Field book!" I howls at th' Big Dipper. "He's got uh field book what shows th' dwellin'-place of suitable female grizzlies. Them records will show jist which said grizzly has bears by adoption and which has 'em by maternal instinct. I'm a expert on sidewinders and gophers, eh? Shore. All my life I've laid on my belly and observed th' home life uh said whistlin' diggers and crippled crawlers. I've allus crawled in th' best society uh Prairie Dog town. Accordin' to th' latest reports I'm livin' in uh dug-out and cultivatin' fangs. Pretty soon I'm due to coil up and bite somebody."

Magpie don't say uh word all th' time I'm reflectin' out loud, but after I rolls up in my blanket and drowses off to sleep he grabs me by th' shoulder and hisses in my ear—

"Ike, I've got it!"

"Keep it," sez I. "I don't care if we are pardners, Magpie, I don't wish to share it with yuh. I know you've had it fer uh long time, ol' trapper, but I never mentioned it to

anybody. If it hurts yuh worse than usual, I'd advise uh cold compress on yore dome."

"'Mighty' Jones," he yells joyful like. "By cripes. I can see it all!"

Sometimes when uh feller gits to ravin' thataway he sez things about folks that he don't like, so I don't comment on him mentionin' Mighty Jones.

Uh course his right name ain't Mighty. He's uh pore li'l runty person, with corn-colored hair, and whiskers which makes him resemble uh mountain goat gone to seed. One day he gits into a argument with uh whale of uh jasper named "Buzzard" Bell. Buzzard is big enough to tie Jones in uh bow-knot, and he grins down at Jones and informs him of th' fact. Jones takes off his coat, throws it on th' floor, jumps on it with both boots, spits on his hands and yells:

"I'm small but I'm Gawd A'mighty Jones!" That's how he gits th' cognomen.

He's livin' up in uh li'l cabin at th' forks of Plenty Stone crick, and he ain't noways friendly nor confidential. He's plumb afraid that somebody will jump his alleged copper claim, which don't assay enough per ton to plate uh twenty-two cartridge shell.

"She's goin' to work out to uh gnat's eyebrow, Ike," states Magpie when I don't seem uh heap concerned over his former joyful declaration.

"Yuh might tell uh man yore troubles," sez I.

Magpie sets up in his blankets and rolls uh cigaret.

"Yessir," sez he, after th' smoke is goin', "that's th' solution—partly. Ike, we could use Mighty Jones's bear fer this here scientific experiment."

"Uh-huh," I agrees. "We shore could, only fer several reasons. Mighty's animile happens to be uh brown bear and, bein' as its name is Abe, it don't stand to reason that its got any maternal instinct, much less uh cub. And what is uh heap more to th' point, Magpie: Mighty would perforate anybody what bothered that brute. If Mighty had about twice as much sense as he's got he'd be half-witted, and I argues that uh fool and uh shotgun is dangerous. Them's my sentiments, Magpie. Th' whole thing is crazy. Yore all crazy, Magpie. Th' perfessor is loco, th' doc is likewise afflicted and Mrs. Perfessor is showin' symptoms. You been crazy fer years and years, Magpie, and I'm gittin' suspicious uh myself. Let's put some cyanide in their coffee in th' morning, and then you and me will go down in Death Valley and dig fer coconuts, Magpie. And besides we ain't got no cub fer Abie."

"Objextions all overruled, Ike. In th' first place, Perfessor Phinney nor any of them wouldn't know uh brown bear from uh grizzly, and in th' second place, we'll go down cautious like and rent Mighty's bear."

"What'll we do fer uh cub?"

"——!" snorts Magpie. "We're sharin' fifty-fifty in this here ain't we? Well, I done furnished my part. I got th' mother grizzly didn't I? Well, you git th' cub. Sabe?"

"Loan me yore field notes on cubs, will yuh? I'm uh snake specialist and——"

Didn't Magpie tell th' perfessor he had one? Shore did. That's what makes Magpie's conduct so danged inconsistent. He didn't have no right to git sore about it. Anyway, it's showin' danged little knowledge uh social etikette when uh feller hits yuh on th' head with uh rock as big as yore fist—especially when yore in bed. Uh course I returns it in th' proper spirit, but my feelin's is soarin' and I shoots high.

Did yuh ever hear half uh dozen long-eared, flea-bitten jackasses split th' stillness of th' night with their melodjus voices? Don't tell me that animiles like that don't talk to each other. They shore must or they couldn't know jist when to cut loose all to oncet thataway, and make th' short hair on th' back uh yore neck crawl right over and tickle yuh under th' chin.

That herd of Rocky Mountain canaries cuts loose right over our recumbent forms and scares delirious delight out of our feelin's fer uh minute. They jist orates one short, "Ha-a-aaw!" and then quits cold.

We stands erect in our blankets and sez things to them jacks, but they jist nods in th' gloom, and wiggles their ears. They sorta surrounds us, and won't go away. Not bein' in need uh any more music, we gits peevish like.

"Let's go over across th' crick," sez Magpie. "Them blasted animile Carusos is too friendly, and it's uh cinch they'll stay on this side of th' crick."

WE AMBLES down toward th' crick, still wrapped in our blankets, like uh pair uh Injuns, when all to oncet we gits another sensation.

"Whang! Zee-e-e-e! Whang! Zee-e-e-e!"

Th' gentle evenin' is shattered. It's bad enough to have yore ear-drums shattered, but when each shatter is followed by uh handful uh bird-shot, which "skees" and "zees" across yore form and fills yore eyes with lint from yore blanket, it's time to investigate. Magpie is near th' crick bank when it happens, and I looks up jist in time to see Magpie disappear over th' bank, and uh splash informs me that he is in th' wet.

"My ——!" I hears uh voice opine. "I believe I hit them. I wish I had some buckshot, but I haven't and ——"

"Bung! Zee-e-e-e!" goes that scattergun ag'in, only this time it's both barrels. I hears Magpie spit out uh personal cuss word and splash back into th' crick.

"Heaven is my home," states uh voice in th' gloom, which I recognizes as bein' that of th' doctor, and I hears him rastlin' around in th' brush.

"Where's that blamed gun, anyway?" he whines. "I never shot two loads to once before, and after this——"

"Cut—cut—cut it out, yuh blamed maverick!" quavers Magpie, and I sees his arms wavin' over th' bank of th' crick in uh signal uh distress.

"Gracious! Did I hit you? Did it go past you?" yells th' doc.

Magpie raises his string-bean carcass on th' bank, shakes th' water out of his hair, and whoops:

"What went past? Yuh blasted, overfed, red-faced porkypine. What do yuh reckon yore tryin' to do?"

"Calm yourself," advises th' doc. "If it hadn't been for me you all might be dead. What do you think of that?"

"Fine," sez Magpie. "I'm like Patrick Henry thataway. If I can't have liberty I'll take uh li'l death. When fellers like you are pesticatin' around uh feller's liberty is shore restricted. What was yuh tryin' to kill, anyway?"

"What made that noise?" hedges th' doc. "What made it, eh? I heard it, and comes out to investigate. I saw what I took to be two skulking animals, so I gave each one a load of shot. One of them jumped into the creek, but I gave it both barrels as it went out the other side. This gun kicked so hard that it was impossible for me to determine what my execution was. I hope it was deadly."

"If I ever has uh hand in it, Doc, it shore will," sez Magpie. "Better go on back to bed."

Th' doc ambles back to his bed, and we recovers Magpie's blanket. It jist missed uh watery grave.

"Gosh," sez Magpie. "Missed with both barrels at ninety feet. Let's go over in th' brush and sleep. Mebby them jacks will wail ag'in, and yuh can't expect uh feller to miss every time with uh scatter-gun."

"Was it uh female?" asks uh husky voice behind us, and there stands th' perfessor in uh white nightie, on one foot, while he industriously picks cactus out of th' other. He looks like th' ghost of some hy-iu white crane.

"What you heard, Perfessor," sez Magpie, "was uh fool! Better git back to bed before he mistakes yuh fer uh white owl."

"Yeaus. Exactly," agrees th' ol' coot, and he limps back. Magpie is uh bit damp, but th' night is warm, so he states that he'd rather sleep thataway than to take uh chance on goin' near th' cabin.

We sleeps some late th' next mornin', and th' first thing we hears is that blamed shotgun. Somewhere up th' gulch th' doc is tearin' holes in th' solitude. We ambles up to th' cabin, and finds Mrs. Perfessor settin' on th' steps. Honest to grandma, she's uh sight. That person wa'n't no beautiful vi'let last night, but this mornin' she don't qualify a-tall.

"*Klahowya,*" sez Magpie. "Did yuh sleep well, ma'am?"

"Oh, there you are," sez she, ignorin' Magpie's salutation, and lookin' at me. "When do I get some hot water?"

"Drink or laundry?" I asks.

She bristles up as much as uh fat woman like her can bristle after uh night on uh real hard bunk, and snorts—

"Do you expect me to wash in cold water?"

"Ma'am," sez I, "when it comes to expectin' things I pass up wimmen. Not havin' known me only uh few hours, and most uh them at night, I don't see why my expectations should interest yuh so much. In this country uh person don't git so awful dirty jist sleepin', so we figger that anybody what is so much of uh dude as to want to wash in th' mornin' can do it in cold water."

"I want some hot water and I want it immediately!" she howls, and waddles into th' cabin.

"I'd say that th' perfessor is more to be

pitied than censured," sez Magpie. "After listenin' to her, and observin' her face and figger, I can't believe th' perfessor's statement that he's ignorant uh natural history. She's shore uh bear, Ike, and I'd——"

"Is that water ready for my ablution?" sez Mrs. Perfessor, stickin' her head out of th' door.

"Right away," sez I, goin' over and pickin' up some sticks.

I don't aim to invade her boodwah. Our stove ain't five feet from my bunk, so I makes our li'l fire outside. Magpie follers me over with uh can uh water and puts it on th' fire.

"Cripes!" sez he. "Ain't uh woman uh queer proposition, Ike? She said at first that she wants to wash her face and——"

"She said she wanted to wash. She didn't designate her face, Magpie."

"That's right. What is a ablution, Ike?"

"How do I know," I snorts. "I ain't no ladies' maid, Magpie. If yuh wanted to know about rattlesnakes I'd be up on that."

I gives her th' can uh hot water and she operates in th' cabin, so we don't know yet what she done. I jist gits breakfast on th' fire when th' doc shows up. He does uh double shuffle in th' trail when he gits in sight and seems tickled all over about somethin'.

"You haven't got breakfast ready yet have you?" he whoops, as he leans his shotgun ag'in th' cabin. "Heaven is my home! At last I have hit something."

He digs down in th' pockets of his huntin' coat, and dumps uh pile uh birds on th' ground.

"Blue grouse," he pronounces. "I found a fine flock of them up th' gulch. Can we have them for breakfast, Mister Harper?"

"How perfectly lovely," gurgles Mrs. Perfessor. "I adore wild game. This will be a breakfast to remember. It must be wonderful to live in a country like this where you can go out and kill your meals."

"Yeaus," agrees th' perfessor. "I'll have mine grilled, if you don't mind."

I looks at Magpie, who is rollin' uh cigaret and lookin' at th' ground, and sez to him—

"How would you like yore's, Mister Simpkins?"

"Never eat meat fer breakfast," he states. "I'll jist take some mush and bacon. Anyway, there ain't more'n enough fer our guests."

"I can go and git some more," sez th' happy sawbones. "Greatest sport I ever had. They're not a bit wild. I'm going to enjoy this meal because it's the first one I ever furnished in this way."

It was th' only one of its kind I ever cooked, that's uh cinch. They ate 'em, but there was'n't much joy over that meal. Th' Doc rastles one of 'em around fer uh while and gits up enough appetite to eat flapjacks. When he finishes he lights one uh them burn-easy cigarets and opines to me that blue grouse is overrated as uh delicacy. I ain't got th' heart to disagree with him, and Magpie jist nods and turns away to light uh cigaret. Moose birds ain't edzactly what you'd call "sweet and tender."

"ARE yuh ready to go with me?" asks Magpie, when we're alone ag'in.

"Go where?"

"Down to see Mighty Jones."

"It ain't goin' to take two of us to bring that tame ol' bear back here, Magpie, and besides I'm goin' to be uh heap busy tryin' to locate uh offspring fer it."

"We ain't goin' to bring it back here, Ike. Ain't yuh got no imagination a-tall? Th' perfessor orates that he desires uh wild grizzly, and it's uh cinch he ain't ignorant enough to accept uh domestic bear. We got to produce this here animile in his native haunts to make th' play come right."

All th' time we're pilgrimin' down to Mighty's wickiup he's ponderin' on uh place to stake out that bear.

"Better git th' cub and it's mama before yuh rents uh bungaloo fer 'em," I advises. "I feels that there's liable to be many uh slip from th' grizzly to th' perfessor. I needs that two hundred, Magpie, but when it comes to gittin' into trouble, Ike Harper is neutral."

This here li'l ol' goat-headed Jones party sticks his head out of his cabin door and stares at me and Magpie. He don't look friendly a-tall.

"We come down to git yer bear," sez Magpie. "In th' interests uh science I asks yuh to ——"

Mighty must uh had that shotgun in his hand behind th' door, 'cause Magpie only gits uh runnin' start on his oration when we're gazin' down uh two-barreled muzzle-loader.

"Git!" sez Mighty.

Magpie looks right past Mighty's off ear and yells—

"Don't hit him with that club!"

I reckon Mighty must uh been excited to fall fer uh trick as ol' as that, but he did. He whirls that ol' gun around, an th' next thing he knowed, Magpie has him pinned to th' floor and I'm removin' the caps off that gun.

"Now," sez Magpie, "mebby you'll listen to reason."

"I will like ——!" snaps Mighty. "I'll listen to what Magpie Simpkins has to say, but I'll be teetotally danged if I'll agree that it's reason."

"We comes on uh peaceful mission and meets uh armed force," states Magpie. "If yuh wants visitors to carry uh flag uh truce, why don't yuh advertise th' fact, Mighty?"

"I minds my own business," snorts Mighty. "Go ahead and talk, and I'll listen if it chokes me."

Magpie sets on Mighty's floatin' ribs, and tells him our troubles.

"But my bear ain't no fe-male and I ain't got no cub," protests Mighty. "Anyway, ol' Abe is sick. I reckon he's gittin' too blamed ol'. Seems like he don't harbor nothin' but uh bellyache, Magpie. I been dopin' th' ol' sinner fer weeks to keep him on his feet. Dog-gone, he's th' only friend I got left. I tries to give him uh dose uh castor ile yesterday, and he tore my shirt off and swallers th' whole bottle. I don't reckon it'll do him any good that-away' do you?"

"If yuh knowed jist what part uh his anatomy it's reposin' in yuh might kick him and loosen th' cork," I suggests, but Mighty shakes his head.

"It can't be done, Ike. Th' cork was broke off short."

"Where is he now?" asks Magpie, risin' from Mighty's carcass, and settin' on th' bunk.

Mighty rubs th' creases out of his skin, and rolls uh smoke.

"He's up on th' hill back uh my stable, I reckon. Danged ol' toothless walloper's done formed uh friendship with uh badger. Can yuh beat it? Them two sets up there on uh rock in th' sun and snoozes all day."

"Heavenly dove!" whoops Magpie, grabbin' Mighty by th' wishbone. "Do yuh suppose they're up there now?"

"I reckon," gasps Mighty. "Leggo my neck, dog-gone yuh. What's there to git excited about?"

"Do yuh reckon we could ketch that badger?" askes Magpie.

"I reckon yuh could. He ain't uh bit wild. I pretty nigh puts my hands on him yesterday when I goes up to try and feed Abe some liver pills. I leaves some fer th' badger but I don't reckon he took 'em."

"Tell yuh what I'll do," sez Magpie. "If you'll rent us yore bear and help us take him over to that ol' tunnel uh Big Foot Smith's and let us use him fer uh few days I'll give yuh ten dollars. We'll guarantee not to hurt th' ol' feller none."

"That's reasonable, Magpie, but I don't sabe what yuh wants th' badger fer."

"If we can pass ol' Abe off as uh fe-male grizzly, I don't reckon we'll have much trouble in passin' that badger off fer its cub. Dog-gone it, they look uh heap like uh li'l bear, at that, Mighty."

"How yuh goin' to ketch him?" I asks.

"That's yore chore, Ike. Git uh rope and make good."

Th' Harper tribe allus was noted fer their gameness. I gits Mighty's rope and ambles up back of th' stable. I sees th' bear. He's sunnin' out there on uh ledge uh rock, and don't pay no attention to me a-tall. I reckon he's got troubles of his own which keeps him occupied. I sneaks around behind him, and there I sees Mister Badger. He's shore uh whopper, and he's stretched out on th' rock with his head turned th' other way.

I gits th' loop to swingin' right, and braces my feet. I ain't what you'd call a expert with uh rope. In fact I'm of th' garden variety when it comes to swingin' th' rope, but I'm game. I gives th' rope uh last whirl and lets her go. Did I git that badger? I'd tell uh man I did! Also, I gits th' bear.

Uh bear and uh badger may be good pals when they're separated, but friendship ceases when yuh pulls 'em together in th' loop of uh rope. Also they makes it uncomfortable fer th' party on th' other end of th' rope.

When I stops at th' cabin I ain't wearin' no pants, but I got uh' strangle holt on that ol' badger. Pore ol' Abie gits loose about half-way home, and he shore moves spry-like to th' top of th' cabin, where he orates his displeasure and shows symptoms uh liver trouble. They helps me hog-tie that badger, and then Mighty complains uh heap about his pet.

"Ike, yuh ought to be careful about Abe," sez he. "There wa'n't no sense in gittin' him all excited thataway. Mebby he'll have uh relapse, and I ain't got uh liver pill left. He's uh sick animile."

"Th' —— he is!" sez I. "He tore my pants off, and almost clears th' cabin in one jump, so I don't reckon he's so danged bad off. We got female folks at our house, so I reckon yuh better loan me uh pair uh pants to go home in, Mighty."

He ain't got nothin' but uh pair uh overalls, which don't meet by six inches at th' waist and lingers jist below th' knee, but I puts 'em on. We ties th' badger to uh pole, which me and Magpie packs, and Mighty leads Abe and his bellyache with uh rope. Big Foot's prospect ain't been worked fer so long that it's all grown up ag'in and looks like uh natcheral cave.

"Here's th' idea," states Magpie. "We'll put th' bear and badger in th' ol' tunnel. Then we'll git th' perfessor and his outfit to come over and see us separate them. We'll keep that alleged cub over to th' cabin long enough to satisfy th' perferssor. Sabe?"

"You got another think comin' if you thinks that Abe and that ol' badger is goin' to hibernate peaceful like in that hole while yu goes over to head th' peerade," objects Mighty. "Since Ike stirred 'em up thataway, Abe ain't acted noways friendly toward th' badger, and said badger ain't got no love fer nobody after ridin' upside down on uh pole fer two miles. How am I goin' to know how Abie's bellyache is, all this time. I can't stay with him."

"Do you think I'm goin' to lose all that money jist because there ain't no love lost between two dumb brutes?" snorts Magpie. "Big Foot must uh been afraid that somebody was goin' to invade his ol' prospect when he built that door at th' entrance, but he shore simplified things fer us. We'll stick Abe and his imitation cub inside an' block th' door. By th' time we git back they'll be friendly ag'in."

"Abie's bellyache—" begins Mighty, but Magpie shuts him up.

"Gosh A'mighty, you gives me uh pain! No wonder that pore bear's got uh stummick ache. You'd give uh wooden Injun th' pip, Mighty. Mebby if yuh quits givin' him all them patent medicines he'd be uh heap better bear and last longer. That stuff's causin' all his hair to come out. If yuh don't quit he won't even make uh decent rug."

Abie goes in plumb willin' but the' badger objects. He tries to squeeze out, but twistin' uh stick in his hide sort-a disgusts him and he retires. Mighty pilgrims off home, and me and Magpie goes back to our cabin.

"Ike," orates Magpie, "this is uh cinch. That badger resembles uh li'l bear uh heap, don't yuh know it? Also, Abie is so shy on hair that nobody could prove whether he's black, brown or gray. Let's be glad."

"Lets be glad uh li'l later on," I suggests. "I'm strong on this here gladsome stuff, Magpie, but this here idea uh countin' yore scientific experiments before they're done experimentin' is uh heap like lightin' yore last match to see if it's uh good one before yuh goes to th' trouble uh makin' uh cigaret."

TH' PERFESSOR is sunnin' hisself by th' cabin when we gits back, and th' doc is fussin' with uh photygraft apparatus. They welcomes us real heartily, and th' perfessor is uh heap excited and pleased to know that we're ready fer th' experiment.

"I hope I can get some good action in a bear picture," states th' doc. "It will help in provin' th' perfessor's experiments."

That was some pilgrimage. We strings out in single file, with Magpie in th' lead and th' perfessor next. We places th' female next in line, allowin' considerable space between her and th' doc, in case she should rear up and fall over backwards on some of th' steep pitches. Also, fer safety sake I packs th' doc's shotgun. When we reaches the alleged bear den we finds Mighty settin' at th' door.

"Abe's ailin' ag'in," sez he, solemn like, lookin' th' outfit over.

"Who is Abe?" asks th' doc.

"His pardner," states Magpie, winkin' hard at Mighty. "He seems to have pains in his stummick most of th' time."

"Appendicitis," pronounces th' doc. "May need an operation."

"Doctor," sez th' perfessor, "this is no time to talk of operations. Prepare your camera and try and picture the proceedings." And then he asks Magpie—

"Are you sure that the mother and young are in the cave?"

"Pore ol' Abe comes to th' door and—"

complains Mighty, but th' doc pats him on th' shoulder and sez:

"Never mind. Just as soon as possible I will diagnose his case. I may have to remove his appendix."

"I don't reckon that's what ails him a-tall," states Mighty. "Yuh see he's been used to havin' his meat cut up fer him but, bein' as I ain't no Daniel, I didn't care to enter th' den, so I jist throws in uh saddle uh venison to him and slams th' door. Mebby he overeats."

"Unique way to treat a patient, isn't it, Doctor?" puffs Mrs. Perfessor, from where she rests her bulk on uh log.

"It is," agrees th' doc, reprovin' like. "You should have given him some broth."

"Never had none," sez Mighty. "Patent medicines don't help him none, anyway. Say, Magpie, I got to worryin' about Abe and his roommate gittin' in uh fight so I comes over after you left and tied th' cub to uh timber in there."

That made it plumb easy. All we has to do is go inside, lead th' cub out and shut th' door. Ol' Abe pokes his head out and wails uh few stanzas, and th' doc snaps his pitcher machine.

"Wonderful!" whoops th' perfessor. "You men have earned that bonus right now. You have shown yourselves so competent that I am willing to chance the rest of it. Do you suppose your friend here, with the sick partner, would accept a small remuneration for his services?"

"Without uh doubt," sez Mighty, before Magpie has uh chance to open his mouth and th' perfessor slips Mighty a yaller-backed bill.

"Thanks, ol'-timer," sez Mighty. "That'll buy me one uh them things what yuh grind meat up in. Yuh see, Abe's teeth ain't what they used to be, and when he eats meat he gits them pains and he's liable to bite or claw ——, I begs yore pardon, ma'am, out uh me."

"Not appendicitis symptoms," states th' doc. "Does he have hallucinations?"

"No," sez Mighty. "Leastwise I don't reckon he has. He's showed symptoms uh St. Vitus dance and th' bellyache and has moulted most of his hair, but I reckon that ol' age sneakin' up on him makes him thataway more'n anythin' else."

"How old is he?" asks Mrs. Perfessor.

"Don't know edzactly, ma'am. I killed his mother when he was comin' uh year ol' but I don't remember what year that was. He's had uh lot uh sickness, ma'am, and most all th' hair's rubbed off his belly, which uh course makes him look older than he really is. Sabe?"

Mebby she don't sabe, but anyway, she don't ask no more questions. She takes uh sixty hoss-power look at Mighty, and ambles right off up th' trail. Th' doc looks sorta surprised at Mighty, but th' perfessor don't pay no attention. He's busy gloatin' over that badger.

"Gracious," sez he. "The young of the grizzly surely do mature young. Doctor, just look at those claws. Do they lose that stripe on the back like a young deer loses it's spots?"

"Uh-huh," sez Magpie. "All bears is striped when they're born, except black ones and they're purple".

Me and Magpie has to pack that badger all th' way over to our cabin. We tries to lead it, but that wasn't a success. It starts all right, but th' perfessor is in th' road, figgerin' in his note-book. That rope gits familiar with his long legs, and he's some strung out when we gits 'em separated, but he don't mind. He sets there on th' ground and figgers in his note-book, while we untangles th' rope off his feet, and never pays no attention a-tall.

When we gits home we ties th' badger to uh tree. Me and Magpie figgers that our labors is over fer uh while, so we aims to take life easy fer uh spell. Th' doc is busy shootin' up th' tin cans around camp, Mrs. Perfessor is croshayin' what looks like uh pair uh ear-muffs fer uh blacktail deer, and th' perfessor is studyin' th' actions of uh peeved badger, so me and Magpie goes down on th' crick, where we got some bedrock stripped.

We're busy pannin' out some dirt about an hour later when we hears an uproar back at th' cabin.

"Now, somebody has gone and raised ——" snorts Magpie. "Them is natcherally quiet folks, Ike, and not given to loud nor unseemly noises, so there must be uh good reason. Mebby that danged badger's got away."

"More likely th' doc's hit somethin'," I orates. "Mebby he mistakes th' perfessor's wife fer uh tin can. She's built thataway."

We hikes back to camp and finds things considerable disturbed. Th' doc is settin' on th' steps of th' cabin, wearin' uh injured

expression and uh torn shirt. Mrs. Perfessor is limpin' around th' place like uh hound pup cuttin' circles to find uh place to lay down. Perfessor Phinney is still settin' there studyin' th' badger, which seems considerable riled over somethin'.

"What's th' trouble?" asks Magpie.

"Maternal instinct!" snorts th' doc.

"Nothing to get excited about," wheezes th' lady, tearin' uh strip uh cloth off her skirt, and cinchin' up uh cut on her wrist. "Perhaps it wasn't a complete success, Doctor, but we'll have to do it again sooner or later. It was merely a humane act."

"Then I'm not very strong for humanity. Hereafter I draw the line to playing wet nurse to a grizzly."

"We overlooked one point," states Mrs. Perfessor, wise like. "To remove an offspring of that age from its mother is like taking the sunshine from the flowers or the dew from the grass. Know what I mean?"

"She means," states th' doc, fingerin' th' long gash in his pant leg. "She means that th' blasted brute needs milk to prolong its young life, and she induces me to help her let it imbibe condensed milk from a can."

"It was interesting to note that condensed milk did not appeal to its palate," remarks th' perfessor, makin' more notes in his book.

"My ——," sez Magpie. "Did yuh try to feed it cold canned milk?"

"Yes, did it need warming?" asks th' lady.

"Shore thing. They won't eat it cold. Next time yuh wants to set th' can on the stove fer about fifteen minutes."

"Live and learn," quotes th' doc. "I knew something was wrong."

That night Mighty Jones comes over to git somethin' fer uh tooth ache.

"Gol' A'mighty," sez he. "I got to have somethin' or lose my mind."

"If that's all, yuh ain't so danged bad off," sez Magpie. "But rather than see yuh lose somethin' yuh never had I'll let yuh take our Jap oil bottle. Rub uh li'l on th' tooth, and she'll be better than new."

Mighty takes th' bottle and goes off down th' trail holdin' on to his jaw. Did yuh ever hear of Jap oil? It's th' concentrated essense uh dynamite, hell's fire and asphyxiation. It cures anything. Never knew anybody to ask fer uh second helpin', but it shore is uh whole medicine chest fer uh prospector. It's jist as good fer penumonia as it is fer uh busted leg, and I knowed uh feller oncet who kept th' pack-rats out of his cabin by jist pastin' th' label off uh bottle on his front door. Achin' teeth is jist uh vacation chore to that medicine.

TH' NEXT mornin' me and Magpie goes over to do uh li'l work on th' crick, and th' doc goes off across th' hills with his shotgun. Th' perfessor and th' badger gits busy watchin' each other ag'in. Long about ten o'clock we decides to drift back to camp to see how things is progressin'.

We're up on uh point above th' shack where we can git uh clear view uh th' country, and about two hundred yards below th' cabin we sees th' doc. He's doin' uh reg'lar Injun sneak in some bull-pines. We watches him sorta sad like fer uh while, figgerin' that he won't hit what he's sneakin' on, when we happens to see what he's after. Up th' creek bottom comes Mighty Jones and Abe. Abe is humpin' along about ten feet ahead uh Mighty. Mighty seems uh heap sore at th' bear, and anxious to overtake him.

"Blasted ol' ossified porkypine," wails Magpie. "Bringin' that moth-eaten, alleged grizzly right over where it spoils our whole game. Let's git down there and stop him in th' brush."

We breaks down past camp. Th' perfessor is still studyin' th' badger. Mrs. Perfessor sticks her head out of th' door and yells somethin' at us as we goes past, but we don't stop—not a-tall. We're jist passin' th' cabin, when:

"Blam! Blam!" goes doc's shotgun down in th' timber.

"Come on, Ike!" pants Magpie, stretchin' out his long legs like uh bull elk goin' to water, and hurdlin' everythin' except the lodge-pole. He didn't need to waste his wind thataway. I'm with him.

We busts into uh li'l clearin', where we first sees th' doc doin' his sneak, and we runs into th' queerest bunch uh misery I ever seen. I've seen uh cougar with th' St. Vitus dance and an ulcerated tooth, and I've beheld uh jack-rabbit which was shot in th' north end with uh load uh rock-salt, but by th' whisperin' wolves, this here exhibition makes 'em all look like uh stachoo uh peaceful moments. Right there in th' clearin' is pore ol' Abe, and he shore is adjustin' hisself to suit local conditions.

First he puts his head down between his

front legs and does uh lot uh contortion work that would stump uh snake. He whizzes across th' clearin' like uh fur pinwheel, uncouples hisself and comes back with his nose in th' dirt and sorrow in his soul.

He's jist about half-way back, and me and Magpie is standin' there with our jaw-bones restin' on our chests, when:

"Bling! Bling!" goes uh six-gun.

Not knowin' th' angle uh them shots, we immediate and soon assumes uh reclinin position.

Mebby them shots was uh heap opportune, cause if we hadn't uh laid down of our own accord, ol' Abe shore would have spread us some.

He didn't seem to pay no attention to them shots, but somethin' in his carcass seems to say, "Go east, ol' bear, go east," and Abie shore heeds th' summons, and hurries right across us.

He plants one foot on th' part uh my carcass where uh civilized man wears his rear collar button, and his long toe-nails seems to shake dice all th' way down my vertebray.

We arises too late to see him leave, hut he's shore pointed toward our happy home.

"Abie seems to have hit his second childhood," yawns Magpie. "I'd ——"

"Did I hit it?" yells uh voice across th' clearin', and there stands th' doc.

He shore is uh sight. He sets there, hangin' onto uh tree, and tries to watch four directions to oncet. His hat is gone along with uh lot of his clothes, and his respect as uh big game hunter seems to leak out of every pore.

"There was two," he wails. "I shot one, and before I could see whether I had killed it or not, the other one walked all over me. I didn't know they went in flocks. I lost my gun. I wonder if I hit it?"

"You did," states uh voice behind us, and there stands Mighty Jones. He's standin' sorta bent forward at th' waist line, while one hand explores th' rear of his pants.

"Did I hit it?" asks th' Doc, ag'in, sorta eager like, and Mighty replies more in sorrow than in anger:

"You shore did. Both loads, dad bust yore soul—and me without no drawers on. I tries to smear yuh with my six-gun, but finds that all I'm shootin' at is yore hat and part uh yore shirt on uh bush."

"Say, Mighty," sez Magpie, gittin'around on th' windward side of th' ol' jasper, "you must uh took uh bath in that Jap oil. You shore are odoriferous, ol'-timer. Whew!"

"It slopped uh li'l," sez Mighty. Abe was ailin' somethin' awful over in that ol' prospect, and I figgers that th' doc would relieve him uh heap if I brings him over. I reads th' epitaph on that bottle and it orates that it's good fer cramps.

"I tries to give some to Abe but he don't warm up to th' smell a-tall. In fact he won't even associate with me, and ambles ahead uh me all th' way over. Down here uh li'l ways I manages to overhaul him and shoves th' whole works down his blamed neck. It shore animates him uh heap, Magpie. I'm watchin' him go spry like and loudly off into the brush, when all to oncet two loads uh bird-shot comes along and hives into th' seat uh my pants. It riles me uh heap. I'll leave it to you if bird-shot ain't aggravatin', Magpie."

Th' doc gits enough of th' conversation to learn that he's shot Mighty, and he seems uh heap concerned. He's still hangin' onto that tree, but he holds up his other hand and sez:

"No more, I'm through using a gun. Mister Jones, would you accept that gun as a present?"

"Now, ain't that ——?" wails Mighty. "Ain't it, Magpie? Here I been wantin' uh britch loader shotgun fer years, and jist when somebody gives me one I've already tied th' danged thing around uh tree so it won't never shoot no more. Ain't that cheerin'?"

"Well," sez I, "lets go up to th' cabin and see how things is shapin' up there. I has uh feelin' that all our good works is ravelin' out."

WE GITS almost to th' cabin when we sees th' perfessor. He's settin' on th' ground near where th' badger was tied to uh tree, but there ain't no sign of th' badger, and Abe ain't in sight.

Th' perfessor's black coat is split up th' back, and his hard hat is circlin' his arm like uh band uh crape. There's uh scratch th' whole length uh his face, but he's still grinnin' and tryin' to write on one leaf uh that li'l book. Th' rest is some tore up and scattered.

"I was right!" he squeaks. "I told Professor Manning that the parent bear would seek and find its young. They went away

together. I had untied the cub to take it down to the creek for a drink, when the outraged mother came along and forcibly freed her baby. She——"

"Bang!"

From th' inside of th' cabin comes th' report of uh heavy shootin' iron, and Mrs. Perfessor spills out of th' door, and skates her three hundred pounds off th' porch. She sets there and claws th' hair out of her eyes.

"Remarkable performance!" exclaims th' perfessor. "She never fired a shot before."

"It—it—it buh—buh—busted," she stutters, pointin' at th' cabin.

"Wimmin ought to let guns alone—also some men," states Mighty, still prospectin' fer lead on th' rear of his personal property.

"Gun," snorts th' injured lady. "It wasn't no gun."

"What was it, my dear?" asks th' Perfessor.

"Milk," she snaps. "Milk for the bear. It just got hot and blew up."

"My ——," gasps Magpie. "Ain't that jist like uh woman. She forgot to punch uh hole in th' top of th' can."

"Never mind, my dear," consoles th' perfessor. "My contention is proved, and we can leave at once. We'll adjust matters with our employees and go home."

"What about th' snake theory, Perfessor?" I asks.

"Do they or don't they?" he asks, haulin' out th' remains uh that li'l book.

"They don't," sez I. "They never have and never will."

"At least I can point with pride to the fact that I hit something," remarks th' doc with uh grin, when he gits on his burro and lights another one uh them stinkin' rolls. "I'm sorry I didn't have a rifle, I might have killed a bear."

"If yuh can see this far, and sabe th' direction, yuh might point with pride to th' fact that I can't set down fer uh week," orates Mighty.

"Perfessor," sez Magpie, "would yuh mind tellin' me jist edzactly what competent means?"

"Th' perfessor adjusts th' remains uh that hard hat on his peaked head, and squints at Magpie over th' top uh them funereal-rimmed glasses.

"Why,—er—it means, adequate or sufficient."

"Thanks," sez Magpie. "It shore is and we have had. *Adios.*"

"It stands to reason—" begins Magpie, as th' caravan goes off down th' trail, with Mrs. Perfessor's burro squeakin' and groanin' at th' rear, but Mighty ceases scratchin' long enough to snort:

"Reason, eh? By cripes, Magpie, that's uh fightin' word with th' Jones fambly from now on and ever more. I listened to reason oncet, and look what she done to me. I got to sneak up on my belly to dinner, and pore ol' Abe's——"

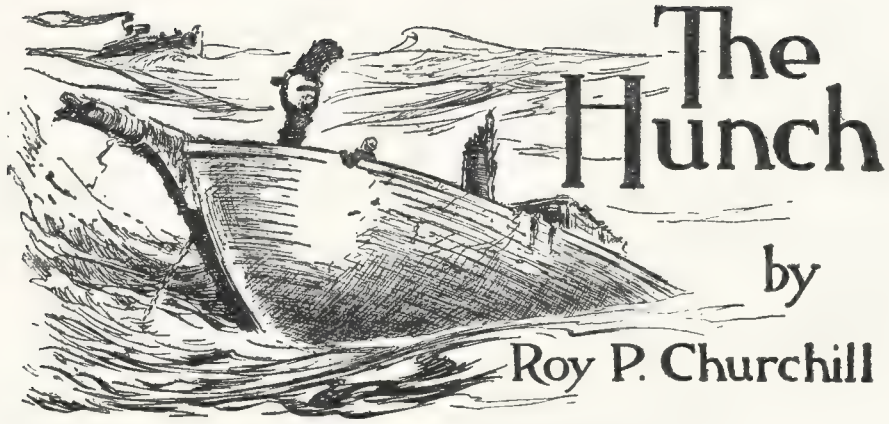
"Abe," sez Magpie, "is either uh bear angel by now or uh fugitive from Jap oil. Here's an extra ten dollars, Mighty. Be glad."

"That's shore reasonable," sez Mighty.

FLAG TALK

by **CHARLES C. JONES**

YOU can watch with eager eye
When the flags of earth go by
For the single banner glorious and fit;
But the Flag can mean to you,
Be it yellow, red or blue,
Not a flutter more than what you mean to it.



The Hunch

by

Roy P. Churchill

Author of "Another Cup-Winner," "On the Way Back," etc.

MICHAEL O'LEARY sat on a ditty-box in the forecastle of the U. S. S. *Panther* and did three things at once. Between his knees was a deck bucket of scrub and wash clothes which kept both hands busy, while he sucked contentedly at a black, cord-wound clay pipe. These two things were mere routine. What O'Leary had on his mind was the talk he was having with Apprentice-seaman Hooper Flynn.

"It's a long trip, Hop," he said seriously. "One little step's longer than scrubbin' up and down this pant-leg six times, and it's a climb as monotonous as cracker hash and beans three times a day."

"But I want to do it," said the youngster. "There's a boy back home won the appointment and he's making good at Annapolis. He never was any smarter than I am."

"Maybe not," said O'Leary. "But it takes money to live on and go to school. In a year now you'll be too old to start that way."

"I know it," said the other wistfully, "and that's why I came in anyways. If I can't get a commission one way I'll get it another."

"That's the kind of stuff that makes good when you do get in," said O'Leary, "but you're tryin' to break in the back way. It's a long pull, son. The way you mentioned is the front-door way. That way they kinder invite you along at every step, offer you a chair and make you feel at home.

"This way you've tackled, you'll find a 'Keep off the Grass' sign on every rate you try to break into. If you keep on goin' as you're goin' now they'll let you be coxswain of a boat in about two years, and then after you've been turret captain and chief boats'n's mate and quartermaster for about three years each, you'll have a chance at boats'n, and two years after that, when you're a-gettin' along about forty-five they'll make you an ensign. You can figger the rest out for yourself. Some time along in the Spring of your ninety-third year if you've broke no rules and been a good boy, you may get to be an admiral."

"I'd better quit now," said the other hopelessly, "if there's no more chance than that."

"I'd tell you to quit too, if it wasn't for one thing," said O'Leary, adjusting his pipe with one of his soapy hands. "That's the thousandth chance, Hop. It's worth waitin' and hopin' for, that thousandth chance, and if there's any way to stack the cards we're goin' to do it. Meantime, keep on knockin' at the back door."

"Why didn't you ever take a chance at it?" asked the boy.

"Who? Me?" said O'Leary, with well-feigned surprise.

"Sure," said Hop. "When anybody wants to know anything about seamanship I notice they usually ask you. Why didn't you try for a commission when you were younger?"

"I'm coach," said O'Leary. "I can tell others to do things that maybe I can't do myself. Then besides there was a time once when I needed that thousandth chance I was tellin' you about and missed it."

"Tell me about it," said the boy eagerly.

"I got to get these clothes on the line," evaded O'Leary. "What's the use, anyhow? It's your prospects and not mine we're playin'."

Instead of doing three things O'Leary suddenly became intent on one. He knocked out his pipe and put it away, closed the conversation, and bent his full attention on rinsing and hanging out his clothes. Hop could not get another word out of him, but that night he found Rebel Bryan in a loquacious mood and found out what he wanted to know.

"A bald-headed first luff of the old *Puritan* fixed Mike," said Rebel. "Humphrey was his name and we used to call him Humpy. Him and Mike had a run-in. When Mike come up for boats'n, old Humpy fixed him proper."

"How long ago was that?" asked the boy.

"A good while," said Rebel, " 'long about six years ago. Mike's been jumpin' from one rate to another ever since. He's been a fireman and a water tender besides quatermaster and Jimmy Legs. I think he's even put in one hitch with the dynamos. Since the time I'm tellin' you about, his ambition stops when he gets to be a first-class petty officer in any rate."

"What's the matter?" queried the boy. "Can't he go any higher?"

"Guess not," said Rebel. "That old court-martial still looms big on his record, and if he made a move old Humpy, who is still in the service, would nail him."

"What'd he do? What's Humpy got against him?" persisted the boy.

"There's only a few of us who know about it," cautioned Rebel. "I'll tell you if you'll promise never to let on that you know."

"I'll keep it," promised Hop.

"All right then. It was one of them little things that happens quick and takes a lifetime to rub out. We're havin' the usual trouble in Mexico and a detail of us was ashore from the *Puritan* to protect the gringoes. Bigger trouble loomed up or somebody got his orders balled and right in the thick of a few of us tryin' to keep law and order with the guns of the ship backin' us up, 'long comes a wireless to pull out and leave the place entirely.

"I was ashore and Mike was ashore, fifteen of us in the detail with Humpy in charge. Of course when the people ashore found out we planned to leave 'em, they all wanted to come off to the ship, but about fifty was all we could carry. It was in selectin' the lucky ones that Mike and Humpy had their little go.

"The last boat was bein' filled, and Mike was actin' as the boat's coxs'n when a little woman with two kids come to Mike and begged to be taken off. Humpy was not around and Mike listened to her story. She'd been cryin', but looked more cheerful when Mike let her talk. Her husband worked out o' town at a mine, and one of the trouble-makin' bandits had tried to make up to her. She was afraid of him with good cause. Humpy not bein' here, Mike had to decide. While he was workin' it over, the woman made her last appeal.

" 'My husband was a sailor once,' she said.

" 'What ship!' asked Mike.

" '*Kearsage*, his name is Brannon, Henry Brannon.'

" 'Not Red Brannon?'

" 'Yes,' she said, 'he was a gunner's mate.'

" 'Red Brannon's wife and kids,' says Mike. 'Get aboard. If you'd just said that at first!'

"The others had been crowdin' in with their passes and Brannon's wife took the last seat. We're ready to shove off the minute Humpy gets back to the dock and gives the word. The boat is full, crowded, with just space enough in the stern sheets for Humpy. In a minute or two he shoves through the crowd on the dock. He had two women with him.

" 'Some of you'll have to unload,' he said. 'These two ladies want to go.'

"Nobody moved. Brannon's wife was settin' next to Mike. She knew the officer's authority, and fear made her prominent among the bunch. She was lookin' straight into Humpy's eyes with her arms around the kids, like somethin' dumb that's had a lickin'.

" 'You,' said Humpy, pointin' her out. 'You look like a native here. Get out and give the ladies room.'

"Brannon's wife covered her face with her hands and started to sob. It was too much for Mike.

" 'This lady is a friend of mine, Mr. Humphrey,' he blurted out. 'Her husband used to be in the Navy. Couldn't you throw out somebody else?'

"Humpy gnawed at his mustache and

scowled. His authority was bein' meddled with. Everybody stopped talkin' and was listenin'.

"'That'll do from you, O'Leary,' he decided. 'Put the woman out!'

"Right there's where Humpy got the surprise of his life. Mike turned his back on him, gave the boat a mighty shove with the boat hook, and ordered the boat's crew to pull. We pulled. Old Humpy stood on the dock and shook his fist at us and jumped up and down and cussed. Then he hired a shore boat and was rowed to the ship.

"Mike told his story to the captain, and Brannon's wife and kids stayed aboard. But for 'the good of the service' and to pacify Humpy, O'Leary got a court-martial for disobedience of orders and insolence to a superior officer."

"What happened to the two women that Humphrey had?" asked Hop.

"Them two?" said Rebel. "All they wanted was to get to Vera Cruz in time to catch the Star Line for New York instead of waitin' for a slower boat where they were. That's the whole yarn, son, now you run along, and if you ever tell Mike I told you, it'll be the last history lesson you get from me. He'd be all over me like a tent, if he knew I told you."

THE *Panther* was on her way home from a station in the South Atlantic and expected to reach Hampton Roads for docking and overhauling in the Navy Yard some time the next day. After dinner as the men dispersed from the afternoon drill, Hop Flynn found himself next to O'Leary as they walked forward.

"How's that ambition by this time?" asked O'Leary. "Still full of that do-or-die stuff—get a commission or open a seam?"

"I've been thinking about that thousandth chance," said Hop. "Did it really ever happen to anybody?"

"Sure it did, son, and your chance may be due today. This old ship's pretty close now to where a lot of people have had their chance. We're in the Gulf Stream and right along here off Cape Hatteras where she swings in and curves out again there's been more doin' for sailors to talk about than any other spot in the seven seas.

"You're booked for the port lookout in about ten minutes now, and this little thing we've been talkin' about might happen before dark. You go on out there and keep your eyes open."

Hop did keep his eyes open, but except for the choppy, troubled sea, he saw nothing. The *Panther* was well out, for naval vessels, with no steam schedules to make, give Cape Hatteras with its sand spits and shoals plenty of room.

The first hour Flynn did not look away from the foaming tide rips and the odd whirling current. He felt somehow that O'Leary was right and that this might be his chance. Following a lazy seagull with his eyes he looked out of his territory across the ship, and saw O'Leary gazing past him out to landward. O'Leary's tense attitude caused him to turn instantly. Out on the port beam, so far away that it seemed almost a dot, was something that looked like a ship.

"Sail ho!" he called instinctively, and O'Leary glaced at him approvingly. Except for O'Leary he had been first to see it.

"Where away?" asked the officer of the deck.

"Port beam, sir," answered Flynn.

The officer of the deck leveled his binoculars, looked through them half a minute, and after consulting the quartermaster on watch, dispatched a messenger boy to the captain.

O'Leary had no binoculars, but he knew there was something queer with the vessel they had sighted. Among other things she was well out of the track of merchant steamers, she was making no smoke, and carried no sails.

He glanced up at Hop still on lookout on the end of the port bridge. Hop had heard the consultation between the officer of the deck and the quartermaster. He caught the question in O'Leary's look and wig-wagged the answer with his finger.

"Derelict," he signalled. "They've sent for the captain."

O'Leary passed the word to the men on watch, and soon nearly the whole ship's company was watching the vessel and wondering what the *Panther* was going to do about it.

Flynn was relieved from lookout, and while he stood on the forecastle with O'Leary, speculating as to whether they would pass by the wreck and report it on their arrival at Hampton Roads or stop long enough to sink it, the *Panther* changed

her course abruptly and headed toward the wreck.

"This looks interestin'," said O'Leary. "Looks like we'd get a little target practise after all."

But half an hour later, when the *Panther* was close to the half-sunken vessel, the word was passed to clear away the port life-boat.

Wonderingly O'Leary and Flynn took their places in the boat. O'Leary was coxswain, and Flynn a member of the crew. The officer of the deck came aft as the boat was being lowered and gave O'Leary his order.

"The captain has decided to sink it," he said, "but we want you to get aboard her and see if you can make out her name before we do it."

"How's that, Hop?" whispered O'Leary, as the boat shoved off. "Didn't I tell you?"

The wreck had been a three-masted schooner and all the after part of her was under water, while the forecastle stuck up out of the sea at a considerable angle. O'Leary worked the whaleboat to the lee side, asked Flynn to go with him, and jumped aboard.

The two climbed up the sloping deck toward the vessel's forecastle, searching for a name plate or other clew to her identity. There was no name painted on the outside of the bow and they found no brass name plates. The seas which had been pounding the wreck, had even swept the men's bunks clear of clothing and bedding.

"I can't make her out," said O'Leary. "There's not even clue enough left to start an old Cap Collier yarn. The only thing I can swear to is that she's been a wreck for a good many months. Maybe some old piece of junk left to rot and washed out to sea by a gale.

"They're wigwaggin' from the ship already for us to bear a hand, and the boat's crew is beefin' about us takin' so long, so we'll take a look into the little storeroom under the forecastle and then get out. The door is still fastened. There might be some old seaboots and gear that would give us a line on her. You break down the door, Hop, while I go and signal what we're doin'."

Left to himself, Hop tried to shove in the storeroom door before he discovered the key hanging by a piece of white line from the knob. At first glance in the dim light, the little storeroom appeared empty. To see better he stepped inside and stumbled over a small barrel, just as O'Leary came down from above and joined him.

"What is it, kid?" called O'Leary. "Tryin' to break your neck? What've you found inside there beside cockroaches?"

"There's some kegs or something in here," said Flynn, "full of something as heavy as lead. I can't make out the labels."

"They're in a stew for us to get out of this," said O'Leary. "The wind's comin' up and the sea's makin' a little. This is a bad country we're in, and the Old Man's anxious to have this little thing over with. We'll roll one of these barrels out and see what's in it if we can, and let 'em go on with their target practise."

Pushing and lifting, the two sailors hurried one of the barrels to the light.

"Some derned foreign wreck," said O'Leary, trying to read the label stenciled on the head. "But whatever it is, it ain't fit to eat or drink. Look there where she's sifted out around the bung. Whatever it is, it's been there so long it's spoiled."

"You're crazy," said Hop excitedly, "I was born and raised in a mill town. I can't read the label either, but I know what that stuff is, it's dye."

"Dead, I'd say, from the smell," said O'Leary.

"Cut out the kidding, Mike," said Hop. "We've got to get that stuff out of here. It's worth money, big money. Since the war the mills can't get any of it, and they're paying any old price, sometimes as high as five thousand a barrel. Look at your hands, man, can't you see they're violet? And that's the rarest kind."

"By jinks, Hop, maybe this is the big chance. If we can just make the captain wait long enough to get her aboard."

"There they go wigwaggin' again," said O'Leary. "'Come aboard at once!' is what I make it. Call the whaleboat alongside and we'll take a small barrel of this stuff out to the captain and let him see it."

Together the two sailors rolled one of the small barrels down the sloping deck almost to where it disappeared into the water, and O'Leary motioned the boat to come alongside the derelict at that place.

WHILE the two sailors were searching for some clew to the vessel's identity, the wind had increased with every minute. Almost unnoticed in their excitement, the waves had risen until the placing of a small boat alongside the hulk was a dangerous feat. With O'Leary and Flynn missing from the boat's crew, the boat was undermanned, and the man at the steering oar made the mistake of not bucking the wind and sea long enough as he came on at an oblique angle toward the place that O'Leary indicated.

"Give way strong a couple of strokes more," shouted O'Leary, but the slap of the waves drowned out his words and the men in the boat did not hear him.

Thinking that there was way enough, the acting coxswain gave his tired crew the command to trail their oars. Almost instantly the boat lost headway, fell into the trough, and came alongside a boat's length astern of where O'Leary stood. At that moment the derelict was lifted high on a wave and gave a temporary freeboard to the boat.

"Haul ahead quick!" ordered O'Leary. "She'll be under you in another minute."

But the warning came too late, the derelict went under, the curl of a wave swept the stern of the whaleboat over her, and before the crew could clear she was up again with the boat impaled on a ring-bolt, and a hole in her as big as a deck bucket. The crash threw the crew floundering into the water, but before the derelict took another plunge, they all crawled to safety.

On board the *Panther* the boat's mishap had been watched with considerable impatience at first, and then with anxiety.

"All safe," signalled O'Leary finally.

"Send another boat," ordered the first lieutenant, "and tell them, Quartermaster, to make the landing further forward. O'Leary should have known better." Then turning to the officer of the deck he added, "we're getting too close to shore, Mr. Healey with this wind, and the barometer looking for trouble. I'd like to be several miles further to sea than here."

"Aye, aye, sir," answered Mr. Healey fervently. "I'll put a picked crew in the boat we send, and tell them to bear a hand."

Mr. Healey's picked crew, eager to take part in a rescue, came alongside the derelict safely, at the exact inch O'Leary indicated, being several boat lengths forward of the place where the first attempt was made.

"Officer of the deck says shake a leg, O'Leary. If there's anybody hurt get 'em in the boat first, then the rest of you pile in. We're due for a sure 'nuff old he-blow, and the quicker everybody is safe aboard the better."

The man of the wrecked whale-boat obeyed with alacrity.

"Is everybody here?" asked the coxswain.

"All but me and Hop," answered O'Leary.

"Well, call him and get aboard," said the coxswain impatiently.

"We're not goin' off," announced O'Leary calmly. "You fellows can beat it on back. If you want to do us a favor, pass up that water butt and a tin of bread. We're goin' to spend the night out here."

"Quit the kiddin' and jump aboard," contended the coxswain.

O'Leary paid no attention except to call Flynn from the storeroom where he was securing the casks of dye, then he waited until the boat rose on a swell, jumped aboard her and passed the bread and water up to Hop, leaping nimbly back on the derelict as the next wave raised the boat on the level with her deck.

"Go ahead and shove off," he said derisively.

"Well, of all the fools!" asserted the coxswain. "I'm just goin' to take you at that. If I hang around here much longer there'll be another boat smashed. Give old Davy Jones my regards when you meet him."

"Forget it," scored O'Leary. "This old tub has hung together through a good many blows and I guess she's good for one more."

"Shove off forward," decided the coxswain, angrily, and a moment later the whaleboat was on its way back to the ship.

O'Leary and Flynn, to keep out of the way of signals from the ship, disappeared into the storeroom. "They won't know we didn't come off in the whale-boat until they report," said O'Leary. "By that time it'll be too dark to send another boat, and they're afraid to get in closer with the *Panther* because we're so close to land."

"But suppose they do send another boat?"

"Not a chance in the world," declared O'Leary. "The Old Man knows too much about this part of the coast to risk another

boat's crew. He'll cuss us for fools, swear he'll have us court-martialed, and then do the only thing that's left him. He won't toss around out here all night the way it's blowin', runnin' the risk of somebody bumpin' into him, or him bumpin' into a reef. He'll head straight for home, I tell you, at full speed.

"But before he does that, he'll wireless the Navy Yard to send a seagoin' tug out here and pick us two fools up. The tug will get here in the mornin' by the time it's light enough for him to do anything, anyhow. The tug of course draws less water and can pick us up if we're still afloat."

"Then the thing we've got to figure on," said Hop, "is to keep this old hulk afloat till morning."

"That's all, son, and from the looks of things it's goin' to be some job. Let's get busy before the seas commence comin' clear over."

During their investigation of the wreck the two sailors had found a kedge anchor whose lashings had withstood the buffetings of the derelict's long journey, and with a tangled lead line salvaged from the mess in the storeroom, they found themselves in twenty fathoms of water.

"We're gettin' in closer all the time," said O'Leary. "By the time we get the anchor adrift it'll be time to let her go."

The chain had already been shackled to the anchor, and cutting loose the stoppers, they got the anchor clear and ready to shove overboard.

"Get clear of the chain and take another sounding," advised O'Leary. "I'll keep my eyes on the mudhook."

"Eighteen fathoms," reported Hop.

"Good enough," said O'Leary. "You take hold of that ring-bolt with one hand, hold me with the other, and the next time she rolls I'll shove it overboard."

Hop and O'Leary were almost down to the waterline on the half-submerged vessel, and when a wave came aboard, it sucked and pulled at them viciously. Each time O'Leary shoved with all his strength and after three attempts, with the water to help, the anchor went over the side, and the rusty chain rolled out of the hawse-pipe to the thirty-fathom shackle.

"Suppose she drags," questioned Hop doubtfully.

"I hope she does," said O'Leary. "It'll ease the strain on the chain, and with a hundred fathoms out we won't drag fast. This old tub's nearly all under water, and the wind gets mighty little hold."

ANXIOUSLY they watched the derelict drift around till she rode bow on to the seas. The chain rumbled out of the hawse-pipe in fits and jerks till she rode to the shackled end in the bottom of the chain locker.

"What now?" asked Hop.

"Let's wait a minute and see," counseled O'Leary. "We're buckin' the waves now instead of ridin' in the trough. If anything's due to carry away, now's the time."

"Grab something," warned Hop a moment later. "Here comes a big one."

Lying flat on the deck the two sailors clutched ring-bolts and held on with all their strength while a roaring foam-tipped wave broke over the bows and hurled a sheet of water down the inclined deck.

The two lay still for a moment after the wave had passed.

"Are you all right?" asked O'Leary.

"All right," reported Hop, "except my arms are stretched a couple of inches."

"Mine's the same," said O'Leary. "Let's get inside before another one takes us overboard. I'm thinkin' if that old sizzler failed to bust anything, none of 'em will."

Climbing into the storeroom they broke open the tin of bread which O'Leary had commandeered from the whale-boat. The storm was at its height, the wind was a yelling demon loosed for ruin, and the white-capped waves dashed in on the upended bow as if to finish tearing it to pieces.

The vessel groaned and strained and creaked, and for the first half-hour O'Leary cursed himself for a fool and tried to be cheerful at the same time to Hop, feeling certain the wreck would not last out the night. But the derelict with her small surface to the wind and the long chain to ease the terrific strain, held together minute after minute and wave after wave.

"She's goin' to make it," announced O'Leary after an hour.

"That's what you said all the time," bantered Hop, "but half an hour ago you didn't believe it."

"I mean it this time," said O'Leary, "but I still think I'm a fool. I led you into too slim a chance."

"I could 've balked any time, couldn't

I?" protested Hop. "Let's try to get a wink of sleep and forget it."

"I'm not thinkin' about a sleep," said O'Leary, taking the cue of cheerfulness from Hop. "What I'm thinkin' about is a smoke. I'd give my pants for a smoke right now."

"No use," said Hop. "If you had the makings they'd be wet. Besides, who'd lend you a match?"

O'Leary sighed.

"Well, go on and sleep," he muttered. "I'll stay awake and keep these kegs from rollin' on you."

But after two hours in the dark with no one to talk to, O'Leary fell asleep himself. He awoke cold and stiff in his wet clothing with Flynn shaking him.

"We've bumped into something," the boy said excitedly. "Whenever she pitches I can feel her scrape."

"If we've dragged onto a reef it'll be good night," said O'Leary, too sleepy to guard his tongue.

"There she goes again," said Hop, "but not so bad. First time she did it, it woke me up."

"Maybe it was just hit or miss and the worst is over," said O'Leary hopefully.

"If she slides off into deep water we're safe enough, for even with this wind, the anchor will hold when it gets to the reef."

This was just what happened. Driven by the force of the gale the hulk slid across the reef into deeper water and then dragged the anchor and chain deep into a firm hold on the rocks. There was no sleep for the two men after that. They could hear the surf pounding on the beach so close that it made them shiver, and each wallowing, vicious snap at the anchor chain made them more and more anxious for daylight and rescue.

"She's holdin'," said O'Leary for the twentieth time, after a short excursion on deck, "and it seems to me that the wind's fallin' a little. How does it sound in here, Hop? Just the same as it's been all night?"

"I don't know," said the other wearily. "I've been expecting her to go to pieces for so long that I can't tell any difference in the noises she makes."

"I can," said O'Leary, "she's gettin' easier. The wind's not so bad. The sky's gettin' a little brighter, too. I'm gettin' so hopeful that I'm beginnin' to wonder what I'm goin' to say to the captain when I see him."

Dawn came in another hour, and with it milder weather. O'Leary and Hop drank some more of the water and ate a liberal ration of the hard tack while they watched for the tug. The *Panther* was nowhere in sight.

"The Old Man's done what I told you he would," said O'Leary. "Let's get the dye on deck and be ready for her when she comes."

There were three barrels of the violet dye, and two others that Hop could not make out. While they worked the tug appeared, O'Leary took off his jumper and waved it. Half an hour later they were in hailing distance.

"Can we get alongside?" shouted the officer in charge through a megaphone.

"We're in ten fathoms," answered O'Leary, "but there's a bar before you get to us."

Cautiously the tug nosed in toward them with the leadsman taking soundings at each ship length. O'Leary and Flynn watched the maneuvers anxiously. If the tug came alongside them it meant that the dye could be transferred easily, while if they sent a boat to take them off, a lot of explanation would be necessary before the deck officer would allow them to transfer their find into the small boat.

"By the deep six," sang out the leadsman. Then "five," and finally "four."

"It's a miracle how we ever got across," said O'Leary. "It's a wonder we didn't stick and break up. If she shoals any more the tug'll be turnin' back."

"By the mark seven," sang out the leadsman.

"That's better," said O'Leary. "They're over. You stand by to take their line and I'll get aboard and do the parleying."

O'LEARY did not know the young officer in charge of the tug, and his opening request had been rehearsed carefully before he made it.

"We've found some valuable stuff aboard this old packet," he said, "and we'd like to have permission to take it aboard."

"What is it?" asked the officer. "You two men ought to be glad to get out of this thing with your lives, without bothering about anything else."

"We are," said O'Leary, "but it's a pity to have the stuff goin' to waste."

"What is it?"

"It's dye, German dye, and the cotton mills are begging——"

"Let 'em beg," interrupted the officer. "I'll give you fifteen minutes. Do what you can with it."

"Thanks," said O'Leary, and jumped to the waist of the tug where he had already noticed a short gangway used for taking stores aboard.

"Gimme a hand," he ordered a couple of sailors who stood watching, "two more of you get aboard the wreck and lend a hand at that end."

In less than ten minutes the dye was aboard the tug and the gangway secure.

"All ready, sir," reported O'Leary.

The quick work won a smile from the tug's officer.

"Get back aboard," he ordered, "and unshackle the chain. We might as well sink this old tub and have it over with. She looks about ready to go under any minute. How she ever made it during the night is more than I can see."

Towing the derelict ahead until the chain slacked, the crew of the tug unshackled it and let the end run overboard. Then taking the wreck as far inshore as their draft permitted, they stood off and with the six-pounders put half a dozen shots into that part of the derelict which still floated. In a few minutes she sank out of sight under the water.

"Didn't take much to fix her," said O'Leary as he and Hop watched, "and we forgot our tin of bread. Wonder if we can bum a cup of coffee and some trimmin's from this outfit."

"Mike," said Hop as the two ate greedily, "it looks to me like we're going to be able to see this thing through. You engineered and planned it and have done most of the work. Whatever we get out of this dye is going to be split two-thirds and one-third."

"You're exactly right," said O'Leary. "Two-thirds to you and one-third to me."

"No, the other way," Hop protested, and O'Leary with his mouth full of coffee swallowed quickly and cut the discussion short. "What's the use arguin' about fish we haven't caught yet? Let's go on and get this money before we divide it."

The tug landed O'Leary and Hop with their precious cargo alongside the Navy Yard dock about two o'clock that afternoon. The two sailors at once sought out their ship and in the absence of the captain and first lieutenant, who had gone ashore, put their case up to the deck officer.

"Under a little different circumstances I'd say we'd have to court-martial you two boys," said the lieutenant, "but as the case stands I will do what I can to help you, and if I see the thing right, you're going to need help."

"The stuff's ours, ain't it?" asked O'Leary. "Didn't we find it?"

"Yes, you did," said the officer, "but let me put the case to you as it would stand in a salvage court. You two men find some valuable cargo on an abandoned ship. You take possession of it and during the time of your possession you are sole owners, but after that you ask for and accept assistance from a tugboat of the United States Navy. In my opinion, that divides the claim in half. You're in the position of the original owners with the tugboat as the salvor."

"Thank you," said O'Leary, "but if the dye is worth half as much as Hop thinks, half of it will be all that we need, and the Navy Department can have the other half, 'for valuable assistance rendered.' What we want to know is how to make the next move."

"You will have to take it up with the commandant of the Navy Yard in the morning," said the officer. "You were serving in the Navy at the time you became owners of the cargo in question, and the commandant may not see that you have a claim at all."

Somewhat depressed, O'Leary and Hop took their departure.

"By the way," added the friendly deck officer, as they started forward, "what are you going to do with the money from the dye?"

"Me?" said O'Leary. "Why, I haven't figured it out yet, not bein' exactly sure that there'd ever be any. But Hop here was goin' to school with his."

"School?" questioned the other.

"A prep school, sir, where I could work for an appointment to Annapolis."

"The first thing they will teach you there," said the lieutenant, "is to obey oders. But," he added kindly, "I wish you luck."

O'LEARY and Hop reported at the commandant's office promptly at ten the next morning. After waiting a few minutes in an outer office a sentry showed them in. Neither of the two sailors had thought to inquire who the commandant was. Their minds were so busy with the arguments they were going to use to save the dye, or a part of it, for themselves, that they failed to consider this important question.

"It's Humpy!" gasped O'Leary in an undertone, as the man at the desk swung around and faced them, receiving their salutes coldly.

"You do the talkin'," he whispered, and Hop, the burden of the interview thus unexpectedly thrown upon him, gulped a couple of times and blurted out—

"We're from the *Panther*, about the dye we found."

"What about it?" snapped the official in the tone most likely to freeze the marrow in the bones of a sailor.

Hop looked at O'Leary helplessly but received no aid. O'Leary stood immovably at attention, his face a little pale, but entirely expressionless.

"We'd like to get—to see about our share of it," Hop finally managed to say.

Captain Humphrey allowed himself the luxury of a smile of derision.

"*Your* share," he said, slowly, enjoying every word, "your share will be a court-martial for disobedience of orders. As for the dye, a tug attached to this yard salvaged it from the high seas. Since you two men are in the employ of the Government, you have no claim whatever upon it."

"We should have half," blurted out Hop.

"Nonsense," said the other. "I have neither the time nor the inclination to discuss the matter with you two men. I am the commandant of this Navy Yard and will do as I see fit in the matter, one detail of which is to see that you, O'Leary, and this man with you, get the limit for disobedience of orders. That will be all," and very abruptly he turned back to his desk.

"Mr. Humphrey," spoke O'Leary for the first time. His tone was very humble, almost conciliatory. "If anybody else had found the dye, two merchant sailors, say, would it have made any difference?"

Humphrey was so full of this long-waited-for opportunity to get even with O'Leary that he forget the unusualness and impudence of a sailor continuing an interview after it had been closed by his superior.

"You're getting to be quite a sea lawyer," he said sarcastically, turning again to face O'Leary, "and I don't mind telling you that half of the dye would have been yours under the circumstances you mention. Also according to a report here on my desk, the dye is worth approximately ten thousand dollars."

Then O'Leary did another very unusual thing. He laughed insolently in Captain Humphrey's face.

"Humpy," he said, using the other's nickname boldly, "you think you're a high and mighty aristocrat, but instead of that you're just a plain fool. You've been waitin' a long time to get me, and now you think I'm all sewed up, with a union jack at the head and a chunk of iron at the feet, ready to be hove overboard. But you're fooled, Humpy. Take a look at that"—and pulling a paper from his pocket he spread it before the startled officer's eyes.

"You will notice," he continued while Humpy took in the paper's contents, "that I was discharged from the United States Naval service two days before we discovered the dye. My friend here, *Mister* Flynn, has one out of the same bottle of ink. I guess we'll take what share of the dye is comin' to us. And as you remarked before, 'that'll be all,' Humpy, now you can turn back to your daily task of browbeatin' flatfeet. But don't ever try to put one over until you've got your man in irons."

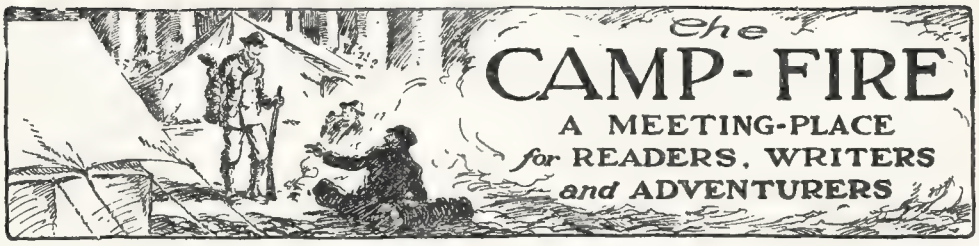
Beckoning to the astonished and startled Hop the two walked out, leaving Captain Humphrey very red with impotent rage.

"He'll fix you when you ship over," said Hop fearfully as they hurried back toward their ship.

"No, he won't," assured O'Leary. "He's due for retirement in two months. He'll never get another chance at us."

"But Mike," said Hop, "how'd you know to get Captain Black to give us our discharge at sea? I forgot all about it in there."

"I followed a hunch, son," said O'Leary. "The day our enlistments expired was the very day six years ago that Humpy and me had a little set-to down in Mexico. I'll tell you about it some day."



FROM our American comrade in the British Flying Corps, a letter dated April eighteenth and telling of stirring deeds:

I have been keeping your letter for months in hopes that I would be able to give you an address, but a permanent address seems as far away as ever. Every month they kept promising to send me back to England to train for my wings (Pilot Brevet) but as usual, they were only promises.

EVENTUALLY, after crashing with a "dud" engine, crashed by a-a guns a month later, three very stiff fights in which we were always outclassed and outnumbered, I managed to drive off hostile aircraft while the pilot obtained some very important photographs.

On the eighth of February I shot down an Albatross destroyer that could make about one hundred and forty miles per hour while our machine could only make fifty-eight or sixty miles per hour, not being a fighting bus, then continued with our job for two hours on a machine that greatly resembled a colander.

A COUPLE of days later an order came through General Headquarters to send me back to England as pilot and I left France February fourteenth and came here where I have been put through preliminary courses of wireless, machine guns, engines, map-reading, artillery observation, theory of flight and a great many other things, but managed to pass the examination with third highest marks in a class of about seventy, mostly all officers with university education and now am waiting orders to be posted to a squadron to do practical flying on various types of machines.

IF THE United States of America declares war, I shall probably come back as soon as my training is completed here. In the meantime I should be very pleased if you would write me, at the address below.

I was very lucky about getting sent back just at this time, as the casualty-list of my own squadron has taken up more than its share of space and a letter from my former flight commander tells me that there is something doing every day that he goes up, and that the anti-aircraft batteries make things rather lively when they cross the lines at ten thousand feet.

THE strain of the last two or three months has turned my hair quite gray about the temples and they have not granted me any leave yet.

Altogether I have put in over two hundred and twenty hours of time in the air over the lines, which is just about enough when one stops to consider that the allotted life of a military pilot or observer is only five hundred hours. If he is not dead at the end of that time the nervous system breaks down. A man who has been over fifty hours without an accident is considered one of the devil's own, and a man who has done a hundred or more is considered a veteran at the greatest game in the world.

Everybody seemed to "go west" except myself; all my pals have been killed or wounded, but I have not received as much as a pin-prick. Why?

But this all must be a bore, so will ring off. —DEAN IVAN LAMB.

BY OUR Camp-Fire custom James B. Hendryx stands up and introduces himself on the occasion of his first story in our magazine. It happens that he was born in the same little town that provided the world with my friend, Sinclair Lewis, formerly of *Adventure's* staff, whose books and stories many of you have read. Mr. Hendryx, however, was a chum of "Red's" older brother and confided to me the name he and that old brother used to apply to Red, *alias* Sinclair, *alias* Hal. No, I won't tell it, but I prevailed upon myself without an effort to try it out on Lewis. He was low enough to meet it with a cheerful grin.

I was born in Sauk Center, Minnesota. Attended the University of Minnesota for three years. Bought tan-bark through the mountains of east Kentucky and West Virginia for a year. Ran levels on the preliminary survey of a railroad that never went through. And then drifted to Montana where I punched cattle in Choteau County for four years. Put in fourteen months in Alaska, and a couple of years in northwestern Canada. For the last seven years I have been engaged in newspaper and magazine work. My first novel "The Promise," is in its fifth edition.

THE newspapers have already told you of the death of our comrade Edmond Charles Clinton Genet on the French front in April. Through his letters to us of the Camp-Fire we had kept in touch with his experiences in the famous French Foreign

Legion, had known his desire for transfer to the Flying Corps and, on the consummation of his wish, had heard from him the interesting details of his training as an aviator and shared in his splendid enthusiasm for the daring work that lay before him. Though I have never seen him he had somehow come to seem a personal friend and I think many of you felt as I did and were equally saddened by the news of his death.

A descendant of Governor Clinton of New York and of Citizen Genet, French Ambassador in 1793, he was all American and, as you know, his great desire was to gain practical experience in modern warfare so that he might put this experience at the disposal of his own country.

HE WAS only twenty-one when he died. Yet, besides the Foreign Legion and the Flying Corps, he had, on failing examination for Annapolis, served as ordinary seaman in our Navy—was on the *Texas* at Vera Cruz. On his honorable discharge he went at once to France.

It was in January of this year that he began active service with the Lafayette Escadrille of American Aviators against the Germans. March seventeenth he was temporarily blinded from a scalp-wound in battle with two German aviators, but managed to reach the French lines. For his conduct on that occasion he was recommended for a citation in orders.

Only a few weeks later he met his own fate.

BY CHANCE, a correspondent of the New York *Globe* saw a group of men in French uniform about a former German cemetery near the destroyed village of Golancourt and noticed the flutter of an American flag over the freshly-made grave they surrounded. From a poilu it was learned that here, among the enemy dead, young Edmond Genet had just been laid to rest. The poilu himself had come a long way in honor of the American boy who had died for France:

"They placed the *croix de guerre* (war cross) there on his coffin," was the first thing he said, this little poilu standing on the mud-guard of our car. "He was a fine soldier. Yes, he was a fine soldier, the youngest of them all—of these Americans who came here to fight for France. Yes, I knew him—a quiet boy. He didn't say much of what he had seen; he didn't talk much. Yes, it is but a few days ago that his friend McConnell was shot down. Genet was flying with him, and he didn't even know what had become of him then. He was making his own fight, you know, and he didn't know what had happened. But it was for that fight that he earned his *croix de guerre;* only he didn't live for them to give it to him, and they have buried it there with him.

"YES; he was a brave soldier. They say he was shot down by a shell which blew his machine to pieces. That is what they say; that it wasn't in a fight with a German plane, but that they shelled him. It may have been that he was coming back to make his landing. He was too brave, you know. He always wanted to be flying. It was the same way with him the year he was fighting in the trenches, before he became an aviator. He was too brave to stop. On the very day he was shot he did not have to go up.

"Those soldiers at the grave? That is the commandant of the group to which the American squadron belongs, and officers from division headquarters. Those others are French aviators and there is one from an English squadron. Oh, some of these men have made great fights, and all the American aviators are there, wearing French uniforms and looking down on the coffin there with the *croix de guerre* shining on it."

ALTHOUGH this is not the first time Frederick Simpich has given us a story it's my own fault that it is only now he introduces himself according to our Camp-Fire custom. To many of you, especially those of you who have foregathered in the general neighborhood of the Mexican border in recent years, he needs no introduction.

It came first out of the fog—early, when I was twelve, the call to far places. The call of a bell ringing in the fog, the bell of a distant river boat gliding ghostlike down-stream through the thick chill haze of November dawn. I dropped the mink I was skinning, to sit hours on the high bluff above the Big Muddy, dreaming of far places the luring bell hinted at.

ALWAYS the old men from log houses among the bluffs talked of Boone, of Crockett, Quantrel and the James boys (not William and Henry but Frank and Jesse)—when I would have heard tales of Genghis Khan, of Chinese Gordon and Warren Hastings. Passed thus years of youth, the incomparable adventures of gun and boat; three years of law. Then freedom. Hawaii, Japan, Manchuria, Pekin and the Great Wall, the Ming Tombs—all far places of dreams. Cruising on the Yangtze in a creaky junk,—through fog—a river steamer slid past, obscure, shadowy in the wet, gray dawn. Chains rattled, voices called, a bell rang—the echo of that bell ringing in the fog when I was twelve, calling still to farther places.

Walled, moated Manila; Macao with its air of Monte Carlo; reeking, mildewed Singapore; the delectable isle of Guam. Up and down the world, around it. Dream places became real, happily,

too, without shattering youth's golden illusions. When I saw Ormuz, Sindbad's treasure rock, from the hot deck of a Persian tramp, its romance for me had dimmed not at all. Nor was Maskat, old haunt of Zanzibar slavers, any less picturesque than in the golden age of Albuquerque and the Portuguese buccanneers.

LAW-CLERK, purser, salesman, writer, press agent (youth will err), editor of dailies. Came to the desk one morning as I handled telegraph news on the San Francisco *Bulletin*, the Washington A.P. "flimsy": "President to-day sent to the Senate the following nominations . . 'as Consul to Bagdad, Frederick Simpich' . . . And I fancied I'd settled down! To Bagdad, then, old home of Harun-al-Raschid; to Nebuchadnezzar's ruined palace at Babylon; shooting wild guineas in the licorice brush along the Tigris, where Turk and Briton are struggling for the control of Mesopotamia. Later to Lower California, hunting Big-horns where "Nicaragua Walker, Gray-eyed man of Destiny" raised his odd flag in a forlorn hope to add a new slave State to the Confederacy. Sonora, last stand of Geronimo.

THIRTY-SEVEN, serving in the American consular corps. Married, with a boy who watches Dad so closely that Dad must be mighty careful what he says and does. Just now he's demanding that I stop writing and draw pictures—pictures of Ceylon elephants, rickshaws on the Shanghai Bund, of alligators along the Nile—of far places which he and I hope to see together.

I'M WRITING this on May seventh, and I dare say it is unwise, in these days when even one week brings such tremendous changes in national and international affairs, to write anything that can not be read until July. Yet certain follies and abuses cry out for every effort, great or small, against them.

Because we don't see German soldiers actually marching up and down our streets, some of us are quite sure there's nothing to worry over and no need to do anything. That kind of intelligence belongs in a nursery for defective children.

We must rouse to the fact that our fate really hangs in the balance. We have probably not yet got a taste of what is coming to us. Yet half the country is still half asleep. Stupidity and self-conceit. Incidentally, I thank my God that I do not come from Missouri. I could stand it, however—for Missouri has much to be proud of—if I could wear a placard testifying that my vote had not helped to send Champ Clark and Senator Stone to Congress. I'm glad, too, that I'm not a voter who voted for Kitchin, LaFollette, Vardaman, Gronna, Norris, or any other obstructionist in our crisis.

THE remaining Pacifists are, thank God, becoming a rather negligible quantity, but one phase of Pacifism still makes trouble—the principles of the most radical and extreme Socialists. Socialism, to me and many others not active Socialists, seems a logical and needed step in the world's progress, but the fanaticism that fights blindly against war without seeing that war may be necessary to a real peace is merely madness running amuck. The saner Socialists see this; but the extremists are doing their stupid best to ruin the very cause they think they are forwarding. What hope has anything so ultra-democratic as Socialism if the iron autocracy of Prussia is allowed to overwhelm the world? Russia, at this writing, is furnishing us with a sufficiently plain example of this kind of Socialistic stupidity. And if the Russian Socialists succeed in keeping Russia from her share in the war against autocracy American Socialists will get painful proof that the best way to promote peace and rule of the people is to fight those who are attacking these desired things.

NOW that the million volunteers who, we were told, would spring up between sunrise and sunset, have failed dismally to do anything of the kind, are we going to go on listening to false prophets? In no wise embarrassed over their shattered arguments, they are still arguing unwisely.

Note these wiseacres in the matter of universal military training. The test has proved the militia and volunteer systems hopelessly inadequate in an emergency, as has every other crisis since the beginning of our history. The present measures that seem about to become law are only temporary in their effect, merely in line with the usual American method of doing nothing until an emergency arises and promptly ceasing to do it when the emergency is over, leaving us equally unprepared for the next emergency. See to it that universal training is made a *permanent* safeguard. No one who thinks can fail to see that it is the only democratic method. It is a duty and an obligation of citizenship, and to make military service a matter of individual choice is exactly as silly as making the paying of taxes or the obeyance of laws a matter of individual choice.

And when the false prophets arise again

and say there will never be another emergency, well, you have tested their wisdom in the past.

AND I hope the expenses of the war will be levied on the unit of property just as the man-service is levied upon the unit of population. Let those who have most property to be protected pay most toward that protection. Let each dollar in the country pay the same number of cents to the common cause.

NO WORDS of mine can lay sufficient emphasis upon the vital need of raising food from every scrap of available land and upon strict and intelligent regulation of distribution and consumption. For nearly three years a large part of the world's peaceful producers have been made into soldiers who produce nothing and consume much. The outright destruction of the world's food and supplies is almost beyond computation. There could be only one result, something very close to world-famine, even if the war ended today. The war will probably last through 1918. Perhaps longer. How much food will there be for us during 1918 and after?

It is still not too late for certain crops. Have you done anything? Are you going to?

THAT the present General Staff of our Army is buried too deep in the methods of the past and the red-tape of the present seems proved by their bungling of the Mexican border mobilization, by their desire to drill men here instead of training them close to the actual school of the modern firing-line, by their stubborn opposition to sending American troops to France at the earliest moment, and by their stupid, unwarranted and undemocratic attempt to suppress that part of General Joffre's message that most directly proved wrong their own superannuated view-point. In wartime the control of the Army must be centralized and autocratic, but it must be efficiently autocratic.

But the real trouble lies in the cause back of the present General Staff—the West Point and Annapolis system. As it now stands it means that men who have never lived ordinary, normal lives are supposed to handle men who have. No other system suggested is so undemocratic. It is the essence of militarism, yet the befuddled people who cry out against militarism without knowing what it means fail to see this militarism we've had in our midst for generations and even advocate the almost equally militaristic National Guard.

UNIVERSAL service will remedy this evil. If it is the right kind of universal service. But a danger lies in this very point. What we need is not a universal service based upon the customs and ideas arising from the academy system but one based on the real democracy of the French army, the most democratic and the most efficient army in the world.

Discipline is necessary, but academy officers have made a bugaboo of it. They claim Americans are so independent that they particularly need discipline. They do. But there's a vast difference between discipline in essentials and discipline that spreads out to where it's not needed. It is equally characteristic of Americans that they are easy to lead but hard to drive, that they have sense enough to give implicit obedience wherever it is needed and stubbornness enough to object to needless demands for it, and that they respond to understanding and real comradeship ten times more quickly than to blind force. Under a real man they are equal to the world's best; under a machine product without understanding or comradeship they are hard to handle.

REAL discipline is that attained by the French army—unquestioning obedience to the officer but friendly equality with the man who happens to be that officer. There is a world of meaning in the French private's "my captain," and that meaning is there because the French captain speaks to them and thinks of them and acts to them as "my children." The stupid may dismiss all that as silly sentiment but upon just that "silly sentiment" and the relationship of which it is the expression has been built up the most practical army in the world.

And more than anything else *permanent* universal service will give to our own Army and Navy this same human, democratic and efficient relationship.

Good men can and do arise from both academic and civilian life but, coming back to our General Staff, it is the academic

tradition that controls and it is our present undemocratic militia and volunteer system that is responsible. It is the fundamental causes that we should change, but in the meantime I wish the present General Staff could be replaced by such men as Wood and Pershing, who are abreast of the times and not bound up with red-tape.

AS TO Congress. At this writing Congress has been talking a whole month without finally passing most of the measures most needed. Perhaps our Government would be more efficient if there were less of that most undemocratic procedure called filibustering, if parliamentary law and rules of order played a less important part than fact, reason and national necessity, and if more Congressmen and other national officials thought less about their own private and political interests and more about the interests of the country they are supposed to represent.

The spectacle of party lines drawn on matters of national necessity is shameful and sickening. *What this country needs is less party and more patriotism.*

ALL these things are, in the long run, up to *you*. What will you do about it?

ANSWERS to a recent inquiry at our Camp-Fire, and matters that will set a good many to thinking back over the old days of the West. The first came from a town in California and was unsigned:

Mr. Frank Houston inquiring about some of the old-timers in the making of the West, as I happen to know some of them I will give him some information on some of them.

THE first I will mention is Frank Gruard. Last saw him in Sheridan, Wyoming, in the year of 1894. His father, who he had not seen for over thirty years, came and met him in Sheridan. He got his information through the papers about his son during the Sitting Bull campaign in the nineties and I could not say if he is dead or not.

As to California Joe, he was assassinated by —— —— in the year of seventy-six at old Fort Robison, Nebraska.

As to Jack Orhomonde, better known as Texas Jack, died in Leadville, Colorado, in the year of seventy-nine. There was another Texas Jack who, with three others, was killed on a creek in the Sioux Reserve about half-way between Fort Pierre, South Dakota, and Deadwood, South Dakota. They were all buried in one grave, killed by Indians while hunting horses.

Calamity Jane, who you have not mentioned, was an old friend of Bill Hikok's, better known as Wild Bill, and died in Lander, Wyoming. The exact year I do not know, but at her request she was taken to Deadwood and was buried beside Wild Bill.—(Unsigned).

I THINK Curley died a few weeks or months ago in peace, in Wyoming or Montana. As to Buffalo Chips, back in the days when Crook and Terry were trying to nip between their several forces the warring Sioux in the Black Hills—and didn't because the said Sioux cannily slipped out from between—in the following pursuit of them matters got so strenuous that some of the cavalry had to eat their own horses, which in their rescued moments I believe they furiously denied. However, ultimately they landed heavily on the well-supplied camp of American Horse, finished him incidentally, and stocked up on the net proceeds. (No, they didn't eat him, in spite of his name.) In the subsequent fighting a little knot of heroic warriors holed in, at the end of a ravine, and stood off the troops for some little time. Buffalo Chips was on the bluff above, trying for a shot. A warrior got his first; after which the troopers rushed the ravine in white-man style and ended the fight. But Buffalo Chips was dead.

You will find a whole chapter of biography about him, and the details of his end (I merely write from memory) in "Campaigning with Crook," by Captain (now General) Charles King, who was in that war from start to finish and was a close friend of Buffalo Bill's. Of course he knew "Chips" well.

The book may be out of print however, now, and gettable only via advertisement in the *Publisher's Weekly*, etc.—JOHN PRESTON TRUE.

JIM BAKER and Beckwith died in Colorado, former in the '90s, latter in the '60s, I have read. Bill Williams was killed by Indians in the northern part of what is now New Mexico in the '50s, I have read in a contemporary book. It was stated that he died with his eyes open, and the Indians were afraid to go close enough to scalp him.

King Fisher was killed in a saloon row, I read in a daily paper, in Texas. He was a road agent, I have heard. The death, and date of the same, of Jules Bernard will be found in Mark Twain's book, "Roughing It." He was shot by the desperado Slade, later hanged in Montana territory.

Jim Bridger died, old and blind, on his little farm in Missouri in 1881.

BUFFALO CHIP CHARLIE was killed fighting the Sioux with Miles at Slim Buttes in Dakota, in '76 or '77. Texas Jack Omohundro died in Colorado, and I am informed that he is buried at Colorado Springs.

Curley, the Crow scout who was the last man to see Custer alive, is still living, I was informed in a letter last Fall.

Bob Wright, of Dodge City, Kansas, died last January, and is buried there. Short, a fellow townsman, died at Fort Worth, Texas, and I presume lies there. He was a noted gun-fighter.

Doc Middleton died in Wyoming three years since, and I believe is buried at Casper or Buffalo. His henchman, Kid Wade, was lynched by a mob in Nebraska, in the early days.

Captain W. F. Drannan died in Texas two years since. I understand that most of the famous family of the Subletts died from tuberculosis. After

their outdoor life, too, think of it. Here is a poser for the medical readers. In the book I have alluded to it was stated that one of the Subletts had a foot so badly injured by the accidental discharge of his rifle that amputation was imperative. And the only material for dressing was fresh horse-manure. It proved efficacious, and the stump healed perfectly, according to the account. But think of his chances of tetanus with that stuff on his mangled limb!

I UNDERSTAND that Wyatt Earp, the old-time six-shooter artist, still survives in the West somewhere. I last heard of him in San Francisco.

Doc Holliday died of tuberculosis in Colorado many years since. I have heard that he was unsurpassed in the card line.

Bat Masterson lives in New York. He is one of the three living men of the band who held back the Indians at the battle of Adobe Wells, Texas, on July 6, 1874. The others are Andrew Johnson, of Dodge City, Kansas, and James W. Stell, of Austin, Colorado.

Simpson, of Trinidad, Colorado, sleeps on the top of the peak where he fought his great battle against a war-party, singlehanded.

I think Amos Chapman still lives, but I read some time since that Ben Clark shot himself in grief over the death of his wife at Fort Reno, Okla.

Pat Garret was killed by a private enemy in 1908, near his home in New Mexico. Curiously enough, he is said to have been shot in exactly the same part of the body as his famous victim, Billy the Kid. Garret's death seems to have been a cowardly assassination, he being unarmed, and his slayer having both rifle and revolver.

Buckskin Joe O'Donnell died at the Soldiers Home at Yountville, California, in 1913, according to an account in either *Collier's* or *Leslie's Weekly*. —D. WIGGINS.

I may add that I have information, that satisfies me as to its reliability, to the effect that Curly or Curley is now in Kansas, alive and well.

I THINK I told you that at last hearing W. Townend was safe and sound, despite the fact, reported by another of our comrades at the front, that his identification tag had been found on a hospital floor. To our many newer readers it is well to explain that Mr. Townend, an Englishman living in this country, wrote many stories for us before he enlisted in the British hospital service some two years ago after being rejected several times by the regular service because of defective eyesight. Indeed, he was, by a readers' vote, our second most popular writer. We heard from him on the front frequently until over a year ago. Then a long silence, then the ominous report above, and finally reassurance.

Later came a letter from him himself, one of the most interesting war letters I have seen. Though it reached me early in December, I have been prevented from giving it to you before this. It is none the less vivid for the delay:

I shall offer no excuses; I can't. I ought to have answered your letter ages ago. All I can say, hoping you will take it as true, is that out here letter-writing is an almost hopeless task. We keep putting it off from week to week until the weeks drift into months and you all at once realize that half a year has flown by. From all this you can judge that my silence is not due to bad health, wounds or sickness, but simply laziness, too much rushing around on various jobs, and lack of opportunity.

AT THE present I really forget when I last wrote to you. It must have been in the Summer when I was in the trenches. Since then I have wandered up and down from one place to another without abiding anywhere very long. I am not in the trenches now. Thank the Lord! I suppose you say: "I wonder why!" The newspaper interview idea is that it's a kind of glorified picnic in the trenches. It isn't. I'm —— glad to be out of them for a time at least. And after all, what is our work compared with the infantry's? Before I came out and saw with my own eyes I had no conception of what men could go through and still endure without giving in. But after a battalion has been in action, in a big charge, in bad weather, you have only to look at the men's faces to know what the strain is.

There is no rest on this front nowadays; we keep on and on, and that's what makes everything so terrible. Our fellows are simply amazing. They grumble, of course—who doesn't?—but they are so wonderfully cheerful; and it means something to be cheerful these days when one has the prospect of standing up to one's knees in mud for days at a time without shelter and with little enough food and with the enemy's guns everlastingly trying their best to batter the trench to blazes. There has never been anything approaching our artillery before; it's colossal.

And without forgetting what our chaps suffered in the Winter of 1914-15, I can feel it in my heart to pity the Germans (almost, anyhow). They are having a —— of a time, we know. And as I said, we give them no rest; night and day our artillery keeps smashing away at their positions, our airmen raid them night after night, and they never know when or at what point our infantry will attack them.

OF COURSE in America you are fed up with the war, but I can wish that you could have a glimpse at it for yourself. You would, I think, marvel, not at the slowness of our advance, but at the marvelous way in which we have captured one fortress after another. The places we talk so glibly of—places which are often referred to contemptuously as small villages—are forts, with deep dug-outs, tunnels for moving troops from one point to another in defense, hidden machine-gun emplacements, concreted, shell-proof, and—according to all previous notions of warfare—impregnable. How do we take them? God knows. We do, somehow. And to see a place after our guns and infantry have finished with it is to see a desert; no houses, everything level to the ground, a few heaps of bricks,

that is all; no trees, no foliage, no green, nothing; just the dead lying everywhere and huge shell-craters and broken rifles and blood and flies and stinks. The flies have gone now, however; in their stead we have mud.

I REMEMBER when I was West in California thinking rather proudly that at last I was really roughing it. I slept over a small stable once, in a loft, and I was thrilled; I worked in patching houses; I went ranching; I did a hundred and one things, all more or less badly, and I imagined I was to be pitied. Out here I sleep where and how I can. I occasionally get a bath, I have had wet feet for three weeks on end, I am lousy, and yet I can be honestly thankful that my blindness kept me from getting a commission in the infantry. If I had been able to see properly it would have been my duty to become an infantryman; as it is, they wouldn't have me—and I'm still alive. Most of my friends are dead or maimed for life; two who won the V. C. died in winning it.

Of course I can not write stories. That's done with for goodness knows how long. Material—tons of it. But whether it's usable is another problem. I have a craving to write as it is, unvarnished, unadorned, hiding nothing. Think they'd stand for it? Honestly, unless one has seen the real thing, one can not imagine it; it's impossible to do so, it's unbelievable.

I HAVE been out here now about eighteen months and have had six days at home in that time, so I'm luckier than many. If ever I get to New York again I'll have so much to tell you you'll wish I'd never left home. Some of the things you see out here seem absolutely matter-of-fact until you think of them in terms of every-day, humdrum civilian life. For instance: a battalion has had the devil of a cutting up in a big charge and is moved to a quiet part of the line for a rest and refit. The men march up through a small wreck of a town, uninhabited save by us, just at the back of the trenches. A platoon halts outside the ruined church and a shell comes over, bursts in the road and kills seven men and wounds thirty-one. We got the wounded into the dressing station and the survivors of the platoon sat in the dusk on the sand-bags and said nothing until they were marched on once more to the trenches. It seemed such —— hard luck, somehow; far worse than being in action and under heavy fire.

IN THIS same little town I came across a jock—that is, a Highlander—on road-control duty, seated on a pile of bricks, reading the latest—the *then* latest—copy of *Adventure*. He had found it in a dug-out. Unhappily for me I could not show him my name in its pages. Where the magazine had come from or who had had it originally I never discovered. Another copy of *Adventure* that you had sent out I sent to a pal. He had it in a small bivouac one night and a piece of shrapnel came through the roof and cut the magazine in two. I wish I had it now but it was lost later on. The same shell wounded one of our men in seven places, but the man who had the magazine was not touched.

COMING back to that town I spoke of there is in one corner near the guns a small grave covered with images from the church—crosses, flowers, etc. The cross at the head of the grave has an inscription in French, all the other inscriptions are in English. "In memory of a small French girl of this village, killed by the Germans," and then follows the name of the battalion or battery that had erected the cross. There are about twenty crosses on this one grave. I never heard the story and perhaps there is no story. All the French people left the village nearly two years ago.

AND that puts me in mind of something else: though there are thousands and thousands of soldiers everywhere, there is a feeling of the most intense loneliness. I think this must be because of the trenches and the difficulty of seeing any one as you trudge along from one point to another. And I quite understand why soldiers crave for companionship under fire for this very reason—having others with you makes danger easier to bear.

The loneliest man I ever saw lay dead on the slope of a crater. He was a Highlander, and had been killed in a rush after two mines went up. He lay stretched out on the chalk, all by himself, between our front line and the Germans. And then, after about thirty hours, one of his own battalion, a pal, could stand it no longer and he went over the top in broad daylight and brought him in. He wasn't doing it for a medal, either.

OUR chaps are a queer crowd. They do such bewildering things. An Irishman of my acquaintance—an old —— Fusilier—used to tell me the most unbelievable yarns. I believed them, however, as they never varied. One was that after one of the fights of 1915 his battalion mustered less than a hundred survivors, considerably less—with no officers. Pat was sent back to find the battalion stores and draw rations. The quartermaster asked him how many he had come for and Pat demanded a thousand rations: whereupon the quartermaster offered thanks to Providence that the battalion had suffered no losses and handed over the supplies. Pat and his ration party threw away most of the grub promptly, but arrived back at the battalion with a thousand rations of rum. The story then departs from the realm of the commonplace. Pat's yarn is that the battalion—or rather the survivors thereof—then vanished for two whole days with an officer whom they had commandeered from a North Country regiment. It may be true, it may not.

But you hear some extraordinary things, anyhow. Is this letter boring you? It's very hard to write interestingly out here; there are lots of yarns I could put down, but the censorship is, for obvious reasons, strict.

AND now about yourself. How are you? How goes the magazine? (Also, when the dickens are you going to print "Mr. Harrington's Wife"? Surely—why it's over four years since you accepted it!—surely, it's time, eh?) If you can send any more odd copies of the magazine they will receive a hearty welcome here, I can assure you. California and New York are a long way from here, and it seems almost impossible that I'd once lived on the other side of the Atlantic. Do you remember when we stayed with you on our way home? What the dickens of a lot has happened since then! I hope to drift in on you some day, but when that may be Heaven knows!

Well, I must end now. You have my address, haven't you? A line at any time is always most welcome, but I know how busy you are, so don't worry unduly.

Good-by. All good luck and good wishes. Yours ever—W. TOWNEND, British Expeditionary Force.

CHARLES M. COSBY has already introduced himself to us but here is a bit of his biography that accounts for his knowledge of scenes and affairs used in his story in this issue:

I enlisted in Greensboro, N. C., by special permission when eighteen years old—that was in 1902—intending to take the examinations for a commission after serving the required two years. My first year in the Army was spent at Washington; the other two years in the Philippines, six months on the Island of Luzon and eighteen in Mindanao. I never took the examinations as I had first intended, but on discharge came to New York City where I engaged in newspaper work. Am still at it.

THREE of you have sent our Camp-Fire latest reports on the old *Morning Star*. A year or so ago we published her picture along with those of other old whalers. At the February Camp-Fire Lambert Hillyer told us how she had been bought for motion-picture work, been sold again and had then mysteriously disappeared. L. H. Haight wrote that about June, 1916, she came into Bridgeport, Conn., and tied up alongside the N. Y., N. H. & H. tracks just west of the station, a few weeks later was docked and painted, and remained tied up at her former position at least until late Fall. Mr. Haight gave us a detailed description to avoid any doubt, and mentioned, incidentally, that her "shipping register says she was built in 1853 in Dartmouth (near New Bedford)."

A few days later P. H. Mitchell wrote that on February 1, 1917, she was at Bridgeport, moored alongside the N. E. Nav. Co. docks, and was the property of the Lake Torpedo Boat Co. Captain Wm. Brashing, of Bridgeport, writes us as follows. Our thanks to all of them. This Camp-Fire of ours is a pretty effective agency for running down mysteries.

She was purchased by Captain Dannehowe for the purpose of a wrecking vessel and afterward he brought her to the Lake Co. in Bridgeport where she was in charge of Captain McGoldich and where I partly dismantled her. Then she was removed from the Company Docks to the R. R. dock, where she was dismantled to her mains and deck-house removed. She is in charge of Captain Tapland and is being fitted with two 250 horse-power gas engines and then she is going to the West Indies in the coal and logwood trade. I don't think Mr. Hillyer would recognize the ugly looking gas-barge now as the trim little bark *Morning Star* of bygone days.

OUR next month's number will be the last monthly issue of *Adventure*—September, 1917. After that comes the MID-SEPTEMBER *Adventure*, out August eighteenth. Hereafter it's the third and the eighteenth of each month, twice a month instead of once.

One of the good things our new twice-a-month publication will do is to give us more chance to chat around our Camp-Fire. Then it won't be necessary to hold letters so long as I've had to hold this one written January twenty-first by our old friend Harold S. Lovett, the American on *H. M. S. Agamemnon* in the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean, the U. S., the Philippines—note again how our Camp-Fire annihilates distances. And prick up your ears, for it's buried treasure this sailor in the war talks about:

Things are not so bad around here, and I'm hoping this year will see it through. When it's all over I'll try and give you a glimmering of war as I found it, which is a heap different to the way historians and story writers give you to understand. You'll "sabe" why I can't tell you now, and anyhow, even when I'm all soaked in ideas and plans and memories, somehow I am not able to put them on paper. . . .

AS FOR an item in "Camp-Fire" in December issue. I've got a word to say to save any one from hitting a dead trail. Mr. Wolcott LeClear Beard's ex-master mechanic didn't lift all the caches in the Philippines.

As he says, Prado's loot really *was* concealed in two packs, one by the gallows on which Prado expiated one of his crimes, and one before the building which was the Q. M. stores in Dagupan. Ask the natives where the latter went, and they will shrug their shoulders and tell you fairy-tales of buried treasure for miles around, because that is their way, if you know them well enough, but they'll keep clear of what you want to know.

AS TO the one by the gallows, well, it sure *was* there, but after he's said that our friend the ex-master mechanic starts to guess. It realized exactly $11,400, Mexican, less than was expected.

The guys who fixed it lost their last dime at poker in a Montana outfit six months after, and when they quit that little side-show their heads were low on the ponies' necks, and their six-guns pointed aft trying to show the crowd that two's company but if any more arrive one of them ought to have slight knowledge of the undertaker's business.

One of the guys lived long enough to get his in Gallipoli in 1915. He left Toowoomba, in Queensland, to join up in the Anzac crowd. Known to his most confidential friends as "Lady" Monahan, and I believe he was some time in the United States Army about nineteen years ago. He was aboard the *Agamemnon* at Mudros about June, 1915, shortly before he took the "One Way Trail" at Quinn's Post.

The other man is probably reading this now. I've seen him with the magazine and I believe he's got a number.

So if any get-rich-quick beats it for Dagupan I guess he'll be sore when he's through.

HOPE you are finding life pleasant enough to suit you in little old New York. It certainly is mighty interesting around here. It's getting cold enough to freeze lightning, I guess, and the country is slowly getting a coat of snow.

Life around here sure is dull. If I did not get a paper occasionally I guess I'd never realize that this was the great war.

Well, I'll quit, wishing you the best of luck and happiness—HAROLD S. LOVETT, H. M. S. *Agamemnon*, British Eastern Mediterranean Fleet.

I HAVE received an anonymous letter telling me that we can not hope to make this magazine a success if we let such names as Hapsburg Liebe appear among those of our contributors. Though the writer of it does not come out in the open and say so, the plain inference is that he objects because the name Hapsburg Liebe sounds German.

Anonymous letters deserve no answers, but, lest others may make the same mistake this fellow has made, things had better be made plain. I sent the letter to Mr. Liebe, knowing he could settle the matter once and for all. Here is his reply. He forgot to return the anonymous letter but it doesn't deserve publishing anyhow.

I have your letter of the 11th, and the anonymous letter. Here is all there is to tell about myself.

There is almost no German blood in me. My father's people, their German name notwithstanding, came from Holland and settled in Virginia a long, long time ago; they were wealthy until the Civil War broke them up completely, and then my paternal grandfather and his family moved to eastern Tennessee. My father himself is three-fourths English. My mother's people, the Carters and Stanleys, a good mixture of Scotch-Irish and English, came from England and settled in New Jersey somewhere around 1750 A.D. One of these Stanleys, whom we all remember now as only "Grandfather Stanley," was a noted Indian fighter and pioneer, and he was a close friend of one of America's greatest statesmen. One of the Carters pioneered, later, to eastern Tennessee. So much for my ancestry; now to myself—

I AM a lanky, squirrel-killing, banjo-playing, fiddling, hound-dog-loving Tennessee mountaineer and glad of it. I began my grown-up life as a soldier; I served a hard term of enlistment in the Philippines, and more than once risked my life for the flag and my principles—which are not those of a writer of anonymous letters, by a ——— sight. When I came home, I went to timber-jacking and saw-milling. I am now an active member of The Vigilantes, and I was an advisory member of the American Legion. I am a Democrat when I ain't a Socialist, I'd be a Methodist if I didn't cuss so much, and I belong to the Knights of Pythias. As to my name, they christened me Charles William Liebe; I didn't like my middle name, so I substituted Haven Hapsburg—without even knowing what Hapsburg meant. Till Hell freezes I'm an AMERICAN!!!!

HAPSBURG LIEBE.

Nothing more need be said to establish the Americanism of Mr. Liebe and to show the chap who wouldn't sign his name to his letter that it isn't good common sense to jump at conclusions. And I wonder whether he is as much an American by blood, deed or spirit as is Mr. Liebe.

I have an idea, however, that my own German surname had something to do with prompting that letter. If so, I can settle that suspicion too. Sight unseen, I'll wager I am more American by blood than is this anonymous writer himself. For at least two centuries *all* my ancestors have been Americans. Among them all there is only the one strain that even bears a Teutonic name; the remainder are all Scotch, Irish or English. Many date from the earliest Colonial days.

COMING back to the general aspects of the case, what a foolish, unjust and unpatriotic thing it is to brand any man an enemy or a traitor merely because he bears a German name. He may prove more American in ancestry than the brander himself, as we have seen. Or, though actually born in Germany, he may be as loyal an American as any one else. Of course he may not, but we must decide that question by facts, not by names or guesses. And if the German-born *is* thoroughly loyal to this country I make no bones of saying he is entitled to more credit than are we American-born, for our loyalty to America is largely due to birthplace, blood-ties, race-ties, early associations, training and education, but *his* loyalty to America is in spite of these things.

AS TO German names appearing on our contents-page as contributors, out of the one hundred and seventy-one listed as our contributors during the last two or three

years only some sixteen even bear names that are or might be Teutonic. Among these sixteen are Liebe, Giesy, Simpich and Kummer, all, God knows, good Americans and *doing* something for their country instead of writing anonymous notes. There is no one of the sixteen whose Americanism seems open to any doubt whatever, unless it is George A. Schreiner, who is a Boer by birth and may not have taken out his citizenship papers here; if not, he owes us no allegiance; if he has, then, knowing him personally, I have no doubt of his entire loyalty.

That there are so few German names among our contributors merely happens to be the case. No German name has been, is, or will be barred if its owner is a real American.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

ADVENTURE'S FREE SERVICES AND ADDRESSES

These services of *Adventure's* are free to *any one*. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules*, thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one friend, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free, *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Later we may furnish a metal card or tag. If interested in metal cards, say so on a *post-card—not* in a letter. No obligation entailed. These post-cards, filed, will guide us as to demand and number needed.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

Back Issues of *Adventure*

Note—A department for our readers' convenience. Our own supply of old issues is exhausted back of 1915; even 1915 is partly gone. Readers report that back *Adventures* can almost never be found at second-hand book-stalls. Practically the only way to get special back copies or to fill out your files is to watch this department for offers made by the few readers who are willing to sell or pass on stray copies or more or less complete files. Our office files are, of course, complete and we do not buy back copies or act as agents for them.

Will sell: 1911, Dec.; 1912, Oct.; 1913, Mch., Apl., May, July, Nov., Dec.; 1914, all except Feb., Mch., Apl., Aug.; 1915, all except May, Nov.; 1916 complete 1917; Jan., Feb., Apl. (2 copies), May.—M. S. CUTTING, 17 Evergreen Place, East Orange, N. J.

Will sell: 1915 and 1916 complete, 5 cents each.—FRED E. WILKINS, Danvers, Mass.

Will sell: Dec. 1910 to Apl. 1917, all issues (77), $7, carriage collect.—A. M. HARRISON, 6008 Bartmer Ave., St. Louis, Mo.

Will sell: 1912, Oct.; 1914, May; 1915, June, Aug.; 1916, Apl., May, July, Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. 10 cents each, carriage collect.—H. C. LINDAHL, Isanti, Minn.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use only a very few fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located one out of every six or seven inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

Addresses

Adventurers' Club—No connection with this magazine, but data will be furnished by us. Can join only by attending a meeting of an existing chapter or starting a new chapter as provided in the Club's rules.

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. Entirely separate from Adventurers' Club, but, like it, first suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 731 Guardian Bldg., Cleveland, O., in charge of preliminary organizing.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

National School Camp Ass'n—Military and industrial training and camps for boys 12 or over. Address 1 Broadway, New York City.

High-School Volunteers of the U. S.—A similar organization coöperating with the N. S. C. A. (above). Address EVERYBODY'S, Spring and Macdougal, New York City.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Remember

Magazines are made up ahead of time. An item received today is too late for the current issue or the one—or possibly two—following it.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* by our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each month in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable and standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, but no question answered unless stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care Authors' League of America, Aeolian Hall, New York. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Also temporarily covering South American coast from Valparaiso south around the Cape and up to the River Plate. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1
FREDERICK WILLIAM WALLACE, *Canadian Fisherman*, 35 St. Alexander St., Montreal, Can. ★ Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S. and British Empire; *especially*, seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care Authors' League of America, Aeolian Hall, New York. Such questions as pertain to laws, customs and conditions local to the U. S. should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Wallace.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N.Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; river, lake and road travel; game, fish and woodscraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs, and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Johnson City, Tenn. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

8. Western U. S. Part 2
JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, Yankton, S. Dak. Covering North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri. Hunting, fishing, travel. *Especially*, early history of Missouri valley.

9. Western U. S. Part 3
Mexico Part 1
J. W. ROBERTSON, 912 W. Lynn Street, Austin, Texas. Covering Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and the border states of old Mexico: Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas.

10. North American Snow Countries Part 1
C. L. GILMAN, 708 Oneida Bldg., Minneapolis, Minn. Covering Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Manitoba, a strip of Ontario between Minn. and C. P. R'y. Canoes and snow-shoes; methods and materials of Summer and Winter subsistence, shelter and travel, for recreation or business.

11. North American Snow Countries Part 2
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. ★ Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. R'y); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

12. North American Snow Countries Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. ★ Covering southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

13. North American Snow Countries Part 4
ED. L. CARSON, Burlington, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game; minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

14. North American Snow Countries Part 5
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 805 Jackson St., Santa Clara, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel: boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipments, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

15. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 397 Monadnock Bldg., San Francisco, Calif. Covering travel, customs, natural history, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

16. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, Sayville, N. Y. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras,

★ (*Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached.*)

Salvador, Guatemala. **Travel, customs, language, game,** local conditions, minerals, trading.

17. The Balkans
ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH, *Evening Post*, 20 Vesey St., New York City. Covering Rumania, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Turkey (in Europe); travel, sport, customs, language, local conditions, markets, industries.

18. Asia, Southern
GORDON MCCREAGH, care R. J. Neuman, 160 Seaman Ave., Inwood, New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.

19. Japan and Korea
ROBERT WELLES RITCHIE, Mountain Lakes, N. J. Covering travel, hunting, customs of people, art and curios.

20. Russia and Eastern Siberia
A. M. LOCHWITZKY (Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), Adventurers' Club, 26 N. Dearborn St., Chicago. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalin; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

21. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, 1604 Chapin Ave., Burlingame, Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

22. Africa Part 2
GEORGE E. HOLT, Castle View, Meriden, Conn. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, etc.

23. ★★ The South Seas Part 1
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, H. I. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen., Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

★★ (*Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents NOT attached*)

California Homesteading

Question:—"Would like information regarding California and Oregon, especially Trinity County, California. Can one get homestead land that is any good there and make a living hunting and trapping? What is the principal game and what are the fur-bearing animals? Can one get work in the Summer in the mines, and what is the scale of wages? I have a friend who is consumptive. How would the climate agree with him? What caliber rifle would you advise one to take? Where can I obtain a reliable book on trapping? I have had considerable experience trapping small animals but none with the larger ones."—J. W. VINING, Webb City, Mo.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—Trinity County, California, about which you ask specifically, is almost all mountains. It is heavily wooded, the standing timber being estimated by government experts to have a value of thirty million dollars. About eleven billion feet, board measure.

The county varies from 450 feet elevation to 9,000. In the last fifty years it has yielded one hundres million dollars in minerals and has many deposits of gold, cinnabar, copper, platinum and asbestos still unworked. Homestead claims may be taken up and school land bought at $1.25 an acre. There are only 2,500 people in the County. It is full of good apple land, many mountain benches that run from one acre to two hundred being excellent for apples. But you must remember that as yet transportation is limited, for the major portion of the county, to pack-mules.

It is excellent land for cattle-raising and the Government is charging only 56 cents a year for grazing cattle, 70 for horses, 34 for hogs, 14 for sheep and goats.

The land open for homesteading is heavily-wooded and any one can get from the federal officials the Government test of the soil, so he may know just what the land is good for. The scale of wages in the mines runs from $3 up. Other employment is limited to road-building, lumbering on forest reserve sales, and fighting occasional fires in the forest.

The Trinity Forest is one of the best game sections in the land. Hayfork Mountain, which is forty miles long and from four to six thousand feet high, contributing eleven hundred deer to sportsmen in 1915. Black bear are abundant in some parts. Mink swarm along the streams when salmon are running. Coyotes are thick, too thick, and in an adjoining county the officials have raised the bounty to $20 for females, $7 for males, and $3 for pups. The old bounty prevails in Trinity.

Wildcats, lynx, (the rufous), mountain lions or panther, civet cats, skunk, polecat, and some other small fur animals are common. The trappers of Trinity count on about $1,200 to $1,800 per annum as their catch. Small game such as squirrels, rabbits, grouse, quail, are plentiful, and the lakes and streams are filled with trout. The salmon cram some streams yearly followed by the steelhead in great numbers. Water-birds are plentiful on the lakes.

Regarding your consumptive friend, I have a friend who spends his time, all except the three wettest months, at Hyampom. He *was* consumptive; he now is free from it. Care against wetting and colds, living outdoors, eating a plenty of nourishing food, and guarding against overexertion, he would do as well there as anywhere.

My rifle is a Winchester 32—40 and it is all I care to have, but men who like the high-powered guns and hunt here are given to the use of the 25—35, the 250—3000 Savage and such small-calibered guns. A small bore is *the* gun par excellence, now. I would not buy anything more than .32 for myself, as that will take care of a grizzly, with the proper powder charge behind it. But it had better be high, rather than low, pressure, for the sake of speed.

You don't have to guess how much to lead a running buck then.

Write to *Outdoor Life*, 1824 Curtis Street, Denver, Colorado, for a list of their books on trapping, with prices. They publish many excellent ones at low prices.

The entire northern part of California and Southern Oregon is good hunting, trapping and fishing ground.

Moose-Hunting in Eastern Canada

Question:—"Kindly send information concerning a hunting trip after moose in Eastern Canada. What are the best months? What is the best rifle to use for moose? What would be the cost of such a trip?"—F. W. STENGEL, Rockville, Conn.

Answer, by Mr. Sangster:—Of Ontario and Quebec, the latter affords the early opening September first, the low license cost of twenty-five dollars and in the new Northwestern portion (Abitibi District) an absolutely virgin game land homing more moose to the square mile in certain areas than anywhere else in America accessible. Ontario, on the other hand, now keeps a close season until November first, thus precluding the legal hunting during the period they are on water and during the rutting period. Remember, all moose-hunting in the Height-of-Land region is either water hunting or "calling" on the lakes and streams. There aren't any roads or trails, save portage paths along the rivers around rapids or from one lake over to another.

The eastern sections of Quebec are pretty well held under lease by private clubs, but this new Northwestern Quebec territory has wonderful moose areas, as well as for canoe cruises and fishing. A competent guide is essential. I can put you in touch with all details if you so desire, being on the ground all Summer and Autumn myself.

The cost of trip depends on the number in your party and duration of the trip. Canoes, outfit and equipment are obtainable at Amos. As to best rifle for moose, that is largely a matter of personal choice. I myself find the Savage .250-3000 Hi-Power absolutely satisfactory. The Ross .280 and any of the .303 and .35 caliber rifles are also good moose-arms. Remember, a moose frequently takes a lot of killing to stay down.

The African Drum Telegraph

Question:—"Being a consistent reader of *Adventure* and a member of the American Legion, I desire to avail myself of the question and answer service initiated by the magazine on a matter often mentioned in stories of adventure in Darker Africa and concerning the truth of which I have never seen any statement in scientific works. I allude to the transmission of information over great distances and with much rapidity by the use of a drum, said to be made from a hollow log with heads of skin. Have you ever heard this drum in operation? Is the art held in much secrecy or can it be read by practically all the savages in the regions where it is used?"—W. W. ALLEN, Los Angeles, Calif.

Answer, by Mr. Miller:—Regarding the sending of messages by drums in Africa:

Yes, it is a common accomplishment throughout the whole of Africa. Hardly a night, unless in the storm season, but the village drums talk. Sound travels further in the night. I was stationed for a year in a northern Nigerian village that kept up constant communication with another village four miles up the Niger, where the presence of water considerably helped in transmitting the sound. But I have heard and read that in favorable circumstances this distance has been doubled.

The drum, or tom-tom, is a hollowed log, something of the shape of an egg-glass, with goatskin parchment drawn taut over the ends. The code is something like the Morse code, long and short beats—spacing, that is to say, between the beats.

The drummers of West Africa have what might be called an international code, for villages but a few hours apart have each their own dialect. In this way the business of drumming messages has become specialized, the drummers of the various tribes making a kind of secret society. It is a unionized trade not open to all comers. I never met a white man who could read the code.

Our Newest Possessions in the West Indies

Question—"Would you please give me such general information as you may have about the Danish West Indies, St. Croix and St. Thomas, recently purchased by the United States Government, or refer me to such sources as may have this information. I would particularly like to know what its future commercial possibilities are, and general statistics as to climate, population, etc."—C. L. BRINKLEY, Florence, Arizona.

Answer, by Captain Dingle:—St. Croix, the largest of the Danish West Indies, might well regain a place of commercial importance under American handling. At present, though fertile and well watered, business is more or less stagnated. Sugar and rum form the chief articles of production, with tobacco, cotton, and some cattle following in importance. Population about 20,000, mostly negroes. Christiansted and Fredericksted are the towns of note—the former being the capital. The island is in the hurricane area, and earthquakes have been experienced. The climate is not healthy: but I believe the cause may easily be eliminated when American engineers put their wits to work. At present I think the business possibilities fairly good for a man who gets first on the ground and does not mind playing pioneer for perhaps a year or so.

St. Thomas was not so long ago the commercial metropolis of the West Indies, but its trade has departed. It will probably come into its own again as a United States coaling station, since it has a fine harbor. It is different to St. Croix in that the surface is rugged and the soil poor. The same commodities are raised in both islands, but in a far less degree on St. Thomas. It is perhaps safe to say that, for the man seeking a livelihood from the soil, St. Croix offers the best prospects; while to the merchant, or trader, or perhaps professional man, St. Thomas will have the stronger appeal. I think it certain that the island with the best port must develop fastest, in spite of disadvantages in the soil's fertility.

Write the Superintendent of Public Documents, Washington, D. C., for fuller information, stating your needs. He will send you all published matter dealing with these places, and from them you will perhaps get fresher knowledge than mine of what the Government intends to do down there. When I was around the islands, of course, they were still Danish, and were slowly dying to decay.

Alaska

Question:—"Could you please give me some information about Alaska? What time of the year is the best time to go there, as a laboring man? About when do the steamers begin to go up there in the Spring?"—Geo. Clevidence, Casper, Wyoming.

Answer, by Mr. Solomons:—Alaska is a fifth as big as the United States and has a coast-line equal to the circumference of the earth. This will suggest to you the difficulty of answering so general a question as your first one. Southern Alaska is similar in most respects to the Middle States, the central portion to the Northern States and southern Canada, while northern Alaska has a short season and conditions similar to northern Europe and the coldest parts of northern (inhabited) Canada, as to climatic and general working conditions.

You may go to southern and southeastern Alaska at almost all times of the year, but work is to be obtained more readily in the Summer and Fall months, though it is true that more or less work goes on in Alaska at all seasons, and in the so-called Winter camps, where underground mining is most easily prosecuted in the Winter season, work is then more plentiful than in Summer.

You can go into the interior over the Winter trail from Valdez or adjacent points if you go now or earlier, but of course the best time to go is in the Spring; and as to interior Alaska direct, or northern Alaska, it is not possible to go until about the first of June, or, for the Yukon, some two or three weeks later.

There are two lines of steamers, principally, The Pacific Steamship Company, San Francisco, and the Alaska Steamship Company, Seattle. The former may be taken at San Francisco, but both actually leave for Alaska from Seattle, which is the main supply point and general headquarters for Alaska trade and industry, except that the main large trading company, the Northern Commercial and Alaska Commercial (the same concern, virtually), are located in San Francisco, also the big salmon company—the Alaska Packers. Inquiries to these companies addressed to San Francisco will find them and will be answered. Steamers for Nome leave about June first. For St. Michael (for Yukon points) a little later.

For general information as to resources, the mining industry, maps, and miscellaneous data the Department of the Interior, Washington, D. C., may be asked, and bulletins, maps, etc., will be sent you. A good way is to ask for their list of publications, etc., and from it select, and request copies of, those that interest you.

Alaska pays high wages, working conditions are pleasant, so far as employers are concerned, and the climate, while cold for a long season in the interior and north, is usually agreeable, bracing and healthful to most people.

The chance for sudden wealth is not, however, much better than elsewhere, though of course a few do strike it rich once in a while.

China and Japan

Question:—"I am writing you to get some information regarding China and the Chinese people, and also Japan, if you can supply me with same. I am aware that I could probably refer to books on this subject galore, but I am desirous of securing the information from some one who has actually been in these countries and can speak from experience.

The information I wish to obtain is as follows:

"Are the Chinese people, as a whole, progressing in modern methods, etc., or are they still the 'Sleeping Giant,' as they have sometimes been called?

"Are they being trained in modern military methods by officers from different countries?

"Are their ideas and customs still being fashioned after the old Chinese Empire, or are they, or have they, adopted modern methods generally?

"What is, in your own personal opinion, Japan's attitude toward this country, and are their inclinations and policies as peaceful toward us as is generally supposed?"—H. M. Fisher, Atlanta, Ga.

Answer, by Mr. McCreagh:—Quite some order, this of yours. Literature, as you say, is abundant on the subject; but you want personal opinion.

Well. Your questions one and three, I think may be dealt with under the same heading.

"Is China progressing?" Yes, undoubtedly. Following the Russo-Japanese war China has made immense strides—for China. That is to say, the Government has officially opened the door to progress. That close-shut, kill-the-foreign-devil policy no longer exists.

But, regarding the people as a mass, it must be remembered that the modification of the immemorial customs and traditions by which the Chinese rule their whole lives will be a slow and tedious process.

Perhaps railway construction is the fairest criterion of a people's progress. In this line China is coming along.

The country possesses some 6,000 miles of railways, of which something over half are Government owned, and the rest under concession to various foreign corporations.

In addition to this, a contract has recently been closed with an American concern to build another 1,000 miles. All this is nothing, of course, compared to this, or any other modern country; but it is a distinct advance on the policy of the country as late as 1876, when the Government tore up every vestige of tracks, fences, and buildings of the pioneer line from Shanghai to Wusung, and built a temple to the Queen of Heaven on the site of the station at Shanghai to purify Chinese soil from the desecration.

Army: The new Chinese army, at least on paper, is organized after modern military methods. There are regular training schools for officers in which the instructors are often Europeans or Japanese. The system of training is entirely Japanese, which, you can bet your life is efficient.

Japan's attitude toward this country? That is a question on which the best authorities disagree. I am no expert; but since you ask it, my personal opinion, based on observation and many conversations with Japanese, is that Japan will never attempt to attack this country with a view to grabbing the Western Coast.

There are many places nearer home and more easily to be got which would be far more valuable to Japan in her scheme of expansion. That Supingkai-Chengchiatum railway which Japan is building under concession in Manchuria, I venture to predict, points the way to Japanese plans with quite a little clearness.

Salmon Fishing

Question:—"Will you please send me cost, size, method of use, of the various fishing craft, cost of outfits and number of men used to handle each type of boat used in the salmon fishing of Alaska, Washington and Oregon? Where can these boats be bought to best advantage? Are they built so that they can be used for any other business but fishing? At what time of the year do the salmon runs take place." —— Marion, Ohio.

Answer, by Mr. Wallace:—Pacific salmon strike the coast in the Spring and the runs continue all Summer until the Fall. The Sockeye appears in the rivers about April, and in the greatest numbers during the "fourth years." 1917 is a fourth year.

The Spring Salmon, also known as Quinnat, King, Tyee or Sacramento Salmon, appears in the early Spring. The Coho, or Silver, or Fall Salmon, comes in August and September on the Northwestern Coast, and September to October on the Fraser River. Dog Salmon is a Fall salmon. Humpback follow the Sockeye.

Method of catching is by means of stationary traps costing thousands of dollars to erect, also by trolling from motor boats, and by gill-nets from motor, row, and sail boats. Purse seines, drag seines and fish wheels are also used.

Three or more men may go in a motor-boat trolling. The gear is not expensive and consists of from six to a dozen rods, lines and trolling spoons. In gill-netting, two men go in a boat. Usual size around the Fraser River is from 20 to 30 feet long.

Boats are built locally. Write Nilson & Kelez, Seattle, Wash. For cost of gear, nets, etc., write for catalog of Pacific Net & Twine Co., Pier 8, Seattle; Linen Thread Co., 443 Mission St., San Francsico. Boats and gear, as a rule, are owned by the canneries and hired to the fishermen, though there are numbers of independent fishermen using their own boats and gear.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada.

ADVENTURE HAS FOUND ONE MAN OUT OF EVERY FIVE ASKED FOR DURING THE LAST TWO YEARS.

SAARANEN, JULIUS, last heard of 10 years ago, when his address was Dallas, Ore., Box 1624. A native of Finland; about 30 years in United States. Sister would like to communicate with anybody that knows his whereabouts.—Address MISS MARY SAARANEN, 406 South Ave., Arlington, S. I., N. Y.

VAN HORNE, WALTER W., last heard of Los Angeles, Calif., Oct. 1911. Light complexion, 26 years, nearly 6 ft. Wears eye-glasses. Blue eyes, wavy brown hair. Last heard from going to take a threshing machine from Los Angeles to San Diego. Was a chauffeur at Meriden, Conn., 1910. Any information appreciated.—Address FLORENCE VAN HORNE, 74 Charles St., Bridgeport, Conn.

WESTCOTT, GEORGE, home in Columbus, Ohio. Advertising on special edition work on morning paper, Miami, Fla. winter of 1914. Last heard of leaving for Columbus, via Jacksonville. Your old friend, reporter at that time on the *Herald*, wants to hear from you.—Address W. CLAYTON PRYOE, Camden, Ohio.

Inquiries will be printed three times. In the February issues all unfound names, inquired for during the two preceding years, will be printed again.

HILL, R. E., home town Kansas City, Mo. Was secretary to the manager from July 25, 1913, to November 25th of the same year. Left Tela, Spanish Honduras, for signing petition. I am back on the old job again. Please let me hear from you.—Address BRONCO POE, Tela, Sp. Honduras.

MAXIAM, MARCOTTE, French Canadian. Was in Deming, New Mexico, 1882, and in Albuquerque in 1883, and employed by W. E. Talbot, liquor merchant of that city. About 59 years, tall and has black hair and eyes. Reward. Any information will be greatly appreciated.—Address J. E. JENNISON, 655 16th St., Merced, Merced Co., Calif.

WILBUR, WALTER, last heard of Southwest Texas about June, 1904. Dark complexion, slender build, about 5 ft. 6 in. Was employed at Connois Grove, San Antonio, from about Feb. to May '04. Painter and paperhanger by trade. Any information appreciated.—Address ARTHUR E. WILBUR, 220 Santa Clara St., San Antonio, Texas.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

JONES, CHARLES AUGUSTUS, left Dubois, Pa., April, 1911. Last heard of somewhere in Mich., Black curly hair, light brown eyes, 6 ft., 190 lbs., 41 years. His wife would like to hear from him.—Address MRS. ALICE JONES, 669 East Capital St., Columbus, Ohio.

WALLING, LEW, last heard of Buffalo, N. Y., 1914. Expert mandolin player. Black hair, 5 ft. 6 in. Blacksmith and machinist by trade. Any one knowing of his whereabouts please notify his brother.—Address WALTER WALLING, 225 So. 6th St., Martin's Ferry, Ohio.

WEST, ROLLA, better known as "Shorty." Last heard of Oil City, La. Dark complexion, 28 years, 5 ft. 5 in. Any information as to whereabouts will be appreciated.—Address R. C. WEST, 639 7th St., Port Arthur, Texas.

FRED, please write me and let me know what to do if you are through or not. I do not know what to do unless I hear something from you. I will not trouble you if you do not want me.—Address DICK, Gen. Del., Painted Post, N. Y.

GRADY, JOHN, (Sergeant), formerly of Troop B, 8th U. S. Cavalry, serving in the Philippines. Last heard from at Winthrop, Ga. Please write.—Address MINNIE GRADY, 1606 Caton Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

BECHTEL, GEORGE (Longshoreman), last heard from in Hadlock, Wash.—Address MRS. MARY E. BECHTEL, Stockbridge, Berkshire Co., Mass.

GLOVER, MARTIN, left the United States Navy October 16, 1914. Information wanted concerning him.—Address C. E. HABERBUSH, 1308 71st Avenue, Oak Lane, Philadelphia, Pa.

MACKIE, JACOB O., last heard from Minneapolis. Left home for Duluth, Minn., Aug. 1910. Let us hear from you.—Address ALBERT W. MACKIE, 1351 McKinley Ave., Detroit, Mich.

DURST, LLOYD, formerly of Buckner Orphans' Home, Dallas, Texas. Would like to hear from him. Friends very anxious.—Address THEO. R. CHADWICK, Box 1813, Globe, Ariz.

HUNT, ARTHUR, operator in Island of Panay, P. I. Signal Corps 1901 to 1902. Came home on transport *Warren*, June 1902.—Address L. T. 350.

ALDRICK, R. B., formerly in Concepcion, Panay. Please write me without delay. I have a trip in mind for us.—Address W. E. B., care *Adventure*.

BROMLEY, ARTHUR, last heard of in Australia. Wireless operator S. S. *Victoria* with me from Seattle to Nome, 1913. Please write.—Address J. A. SAXTON, Hall of Records, Los Angeles, Calif.

BOYS of Co. T., P. S. of T. Your captain would like to hear from any of you. Very important.—Address CAPTAIN A. V. FICKLE, Wahiawa, T. H.

SAMMONS, WM. H., last heard of in Atkinson, Ill. about 15 years ago. His father is dead.—Address O. P. SAMMONS, Hollis, Okla.

SMITH, GEO. L., please communicate with me.—Address WALTER A. GALVIN, care Gen. Del., Philadelphia, Pa.

MARTIN, FLORENCE, my wife. Last heard from in Livingston, Mont., 1914. Would like to hear from her.—Address L. T. 349.

FRANKIE, "BOTTLES" of Eport who was with me in Newark in the end of 1916. Tell J. S. SCANLAN, Gen. Del., Galveston, Texas, JACK SOMNER.

MILLER, THOMAS LION, formerly of Montauk L. I. Please write old "buddy."—Address BOB FISHER, 127 West 183rd St., New York City, N. Y.

THE following have been inquired for in full in either the June or July issues of *Adventure*. They can get name of inquirer from this magazine:

ALLEN, WILLIAM C.; Anderson, "Mooney and Ravenham;" Avery, Gus.; Baird, from Glasgow' Scotland; Bengthsson, Alfred, generally known as Fred or Al. Benson; Bloom, Paul or "The White Dutchman;' Botts, Mrs.; Callen, Phil.; Chaplin, Frederick, L.; Connolly, Charles; Crammer, John; Crisp, Edward; Cummings, Harold H.; Dishon, Birt or (Shorty); Egan, Edward; Foote, Alden Willert and Arthur Longworth; Gearhart, Ray; Green, Glenn S.; Hamilton, Mildred Frances; Harbin, Hayden; Harris, George; Harris, James T.; Hoffman, August F.; Jennings, Andrew (Buzz); Kavanagh, Edward; Lebcher, Dr. Chester; Lynch, P. J. A.: McDaniel, George; McGregor, Stuart; McLanahan, Mrs. Caroline; Martin, Chas. F.; Miller, "Virgy;" Montross, Samuel; Moore, Mrs Mae or Mae Allison; Mullen, David W.; Neuton, Jesse O.; Parker, of Erie, Pa. first name unknown. Boatswain's mate; Peterson, Earl Leslie; Preston, Bud; Riley, A. F.; Roberts, Charles A.; Solar, William T. (Dutch); Swain, Fred; Wallce, Oliver R.; White, Carl; Wilston, Lewis E.; Yeager, Neva M. and her daughter Helen.

MISCELLANEOUS: Members of Co. "G" 13th U. S. Inf., Ft. Wingate, N. M., from 1880 to 1884; English, where are you now? Survivors of Co. H., 6th Regt. California Volunteers, War of the Rebellion.

HASTLAR GAL BREATH, W. E. Felts, Jan Spaander, Bertha Wilkins Starkweather.

NUMBERS L. T. 284, C 293, W. 311, W. 312, L. T. 343. Please send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at addresses given us do not reach you.—Address HARRY ERWIN WADE, care *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

In addition to those stories mentioned in our ad. on page two, the following are now booked for the first September issue, in your hands August third:

The Henpunchers of Piperock *By W. C. Tuttle*

Razor-back hogs, hens, and two sons of Montana give you a rip-roaring time.

That Blasted Discipline *By Gordon McCreagh*

If there's any good in a lad the U. S. Navy will usually make a real man of him. You learn in this tale what it did for a Brooklyn boy.

The Measure of a Man *By William Dudley Pelley*

A cowboy sets out alone to clean up a rock-fisted bunch of game-poachers in the backwoods of Vermont. They give him a red-hot reception.

Muchacho of Tumbling Water *By Robert J. Pearsall*

A tale of the American Service in the Philippines.

The Grandson of Black George *By Arthur D. Howden-Smith*

The dramatic life story of King Peter of Serbia. Related by a man who is at home in the Balkans.

Rotorua Rex *By J. Allan Dunn*

The third instalment of this big serial carries you on to new adventures in the far Islands of the South Seas.

A Frontier Romance *By Edwin L. Sabin*

A tale of those pioneers who faced the perils of the old West to give its riches to the world.

The Breitstein Brand *By C. Hilton-Turvey*

To be a patriot you must give your country a square deal, whether at the front or in the shoe-factory. Breitstein shows you the way.

FIRST SEPTEMBER ISSUE

Sacks of mail and "Bull" Durham are in evidence in this photograph of the Regimental Post Office of the First Illinois Infantry, taken at Camp Landa, near New Braunfels, Texas. Dewitt G. Call, Regimental Postmaster, and Privates Max J. Wetter and Bert V. Keppler.

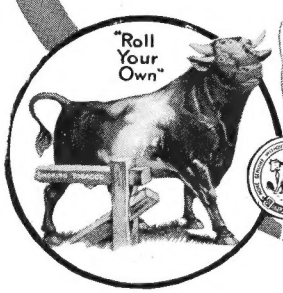
Army Postmasters "Roll Their Own"

Wherever you find an encampment of U. S. troops you'll find the "Makings". It's army tradition that Uncle Sam's soldiers shall always "*roll their own*" and "*hold their own*". Same way in the navy. For three generations "Bull" Durham has been the universal smoke of both arms of the Service.

GENUINE "BULL" DURHAM TOBACCO

You can make for yourself, with your own hands, the mildest, most fragrant, most enjoyable cigarette in the world—and the most economical. Machines can't imitate it. The only way to get that freshness, that flavor, that lasting satisfaction—is to **"roll your own"** with good old "Bull" Durham tobacco.

The "Makings" of a Nation



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A Suggestion to Pipe Smokers

Just try mixing a little genuine "Bull" Durham tobacco with your favorite pipe tobacco.—It's like sugar in your coffee

Chesterfield
CIGARETTES
of IMPORTED *and* DOMESTIC *tobaccos — Blended*

Mild? Sure!
—yet they "Satisfy"

Here's a cigarette, Chesterfield, that is mild, *yes.* But they do something never before done by any other *mild* cigarette—they *let you know you are smoking*—they "*Satisfy*"! You'll know what "*Satisfy*" means when you light your first Chesterfield.

Liggett & Myers Tobacco Co.

20 *for* 10c